



# DECONSTRUCTING THE THRESHOLD

A NEW ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE FOR  
THE THREE NATIONS BORDER CROSSING





# DECONSTRUCTING THE THRESHOLD

A NEW ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE FOR THE THREE NATIONS BORDER CROSSING

By  
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requirements for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

Deconstructing the Threshold: A New Architectural Language for the Three Nations Border Crossing confronts the philosophical framework of the international border between Canada and the United States. By identifying three fictions, following Peter Eisenman in his essay "The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End," the thesis categorizes the language of a border crossing into three fictions: Identity (Meaning), Truth (Threshold) and History (Borders through Time). By understanding these fictions to be the message that Ports of Entry (POE) are designed to convey, how can they be deconstructed, to be read by groups of people who do not acknowledge the border? The study site and location of a building proposal is located at the Seaway International Bridge Crossing spanning between Cornwall, Ontario and Rooseveltown, New York. The site plays an important role in the ideas presented in the thesis as the site is the location of Akwesasne First Nation, unceded Mohawk territory which is bisected by this border, reinforcing the idea of borders as abstract constructs. As borders are not perceived in the same way by everyone this thesis poses the question - how can a threshold become a space that embodies the idea of shared collective difference?

### Key Words:

Architecture  
Border Crossing  
Threshold  
Deconstructivism  
First Nation  
Identity  
Port of Entry





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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CBP - Customs and Border Protection  
CBSA - Canada Border Services Agency  
FN - First Nation  
PIL - Primary Inspection Lane  
POE - Port of Entry  
SIBC - Seaway International Bridge Corporation

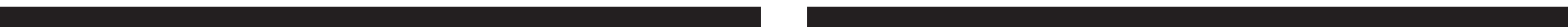


## PREFACE

Land has been regarded as a precious thing dating back well before documented history. As our distant ancestors began to shift from nomadic lifestyles to sedentary ones, the idea of separating land and territory began to develop. Taking on a variety of forms through history, the defining of territory was intended to create a dialectical relationship, one which was inclusionary and exclusionary.<sup>1</sup> New bounded territories became united with a common ideal; sovereignty, ultimately distinguishing what was land belonging to the nation and that which wasn't. These places were defined by borders, physical and imagined. Despite a border's intention to separate space, the human desire to move between them still existed. In many cases along guarded boundaries, the thresholds which define the entry points are often constructed as points of defense, acting to protect the identity contained within the boundary. In our contemporary world, borders are still regarded as important social constructs despite their often fictitious nature. The perceived requirement to enhance national security along the international border between Canada and the United States has resulted in a greater sense of division between the two countries. Rather than this border and the buildings which define its thresholds being an icon of separation, they could be reimagined as places of shared collective difference.



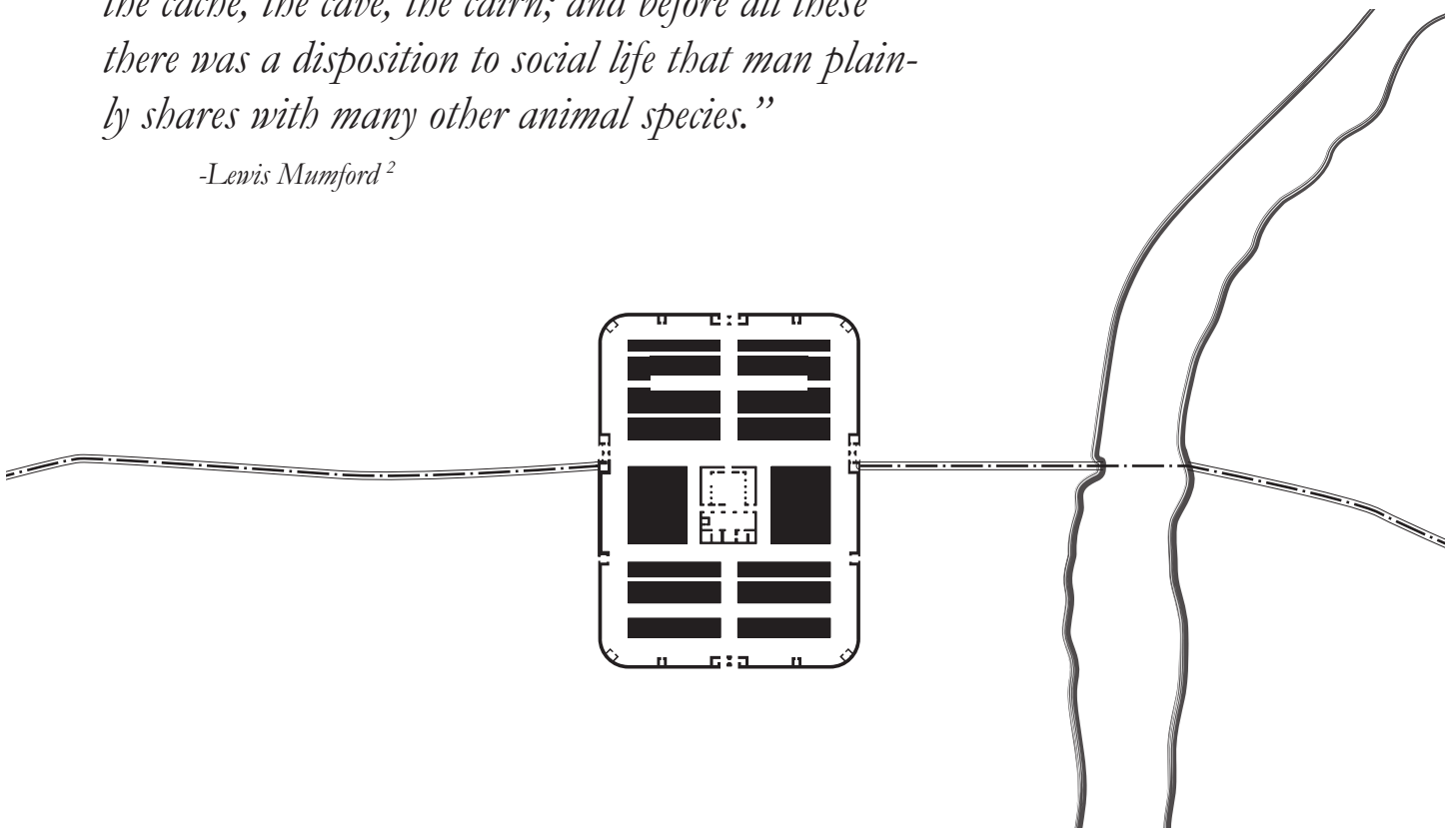
# LAND AND DIVISION





*“Before the city there was the Hamlet and the shrine and the village: before the village, the camp, the cache, the cave, the cairn; and before all these there was a disposition to social life that man plainly shares with many other animal species.”*

*-Lewis Mumford<sup>2</sup>*



The decision to settle and establish oneself in a specific place has historical significance. Offering a sense of stability, convenience and defense, human settlements contrasted the way of life of nomadic people. Sacred places and regions would have been visited time and again, even before the development of settlements. This act of returning to a place would have resulted from it containing some type of meaning, physical or spiritual and can be understood as a human intuitive connection to the land that we walk along and the realm in which we experience life.<sup>3</sup> This common feeling is shared with other species, as can be seen through animal migratory patterns, traversing thousands of kilometers for breeding or sustenance.

For humans, the nomadic lifestyle yielded a level of uncertainty. Through constant movement, the ability to accumulate tools and resources was difficult, the sources of sustenance were unpredictable and the constant threat of impacts on people's survival was always in question. The Neolithic revolution, which began approximately 12,000 years ago, yielded some of the first stationary developed areas, most famously Mesopotamia. Settling down in one specific place allowed for the domestication of plants and animal species. Through this act the world around was no longer expansive and limitless but began to be viewed at a micro level. Through capturing and breeding animals and early agricultural practices a higher degree of surety for survival resulted for those who made the effort to do so.

Of critical importance to understand with this concept is the idea of effort, implied value and sacredness by whom the effort was exerted. Land gathered more meaning as people began to understand the inherent value of settling in a distinct place.<sup>4</sup> The expansiveness of the planet was the old realm and the Neolithic mentality inverted this idea to look more closely at the space in which people were living as having much greater potential. This action of rethinking space would ultimately yield a sense of limitation, or territory.

The intensification of human effort on individual pieces of land became important to early village settlements, developing the notion of the center. Each small village acted as a microcosm of the modern nation. It acted as a model of the human desire to divide. Those places themselves became sacred and thus needed protection. Early settlements contained elements which contributed to the desire to separate sacred and profane; from pens and stockades containing animals, to mounds for burial, the idea of division was primitive but present.<sup>5</sup>

▲ Fig. 1.1: Hadrian's Wall

◀ Fig 1.2: Plan of Cilurnum, an ancient port of entry along Hadrian's Wall, near Warwick, England





Throughout history, cities and nations formed in a variety of ways. Clans and guilds were often joined through common ideals such as language, economics, family and religion.<sup>6</sup> Groups of people and settlements were established as a result of some shared collective idea. Each settlement usually contained at least the idea of an established boundary. The concept of boundary contained a variety of physical or mental dimensions which established the delineation of the sacred space inside and the space outside of it as profane. These early settlements are the seeds through which nations grew. Beginning as villages and then into hamlets, communities formed through a series of mutually beneficial networks.<sup>7</sup> Trade and movement from one place to the next formed a bond between groups. However, as the network grew so did the complication associated with it. Constructing these boundaries became fraught with social, political and economic disparity necessitating regulation at a regional level.

Running near the current border between England and Scotland and stretching 118 kilometers from the River Tyne to Solway Firth, Hadrian's Wall remains an artifact to the boundary of the Roman Empire. Built in the second century AD it acted as a fortification wall constructed of stone and wood and now lays as a historical layer of what was once regarded as the limits of the vast Roman Empire, which had accumulated from a series of settlements.<sup>8</sup> The former boundary wall contains threshold points which were often used as points of commerce, trade, lodging for the guardians who would patrol the border and act in its defense, but at the same time they were check points for those who wanted to cross the line.<sup>9</sup> Our current global fabric reflects a relentless desire to claim and distinguish "ours and theirs."

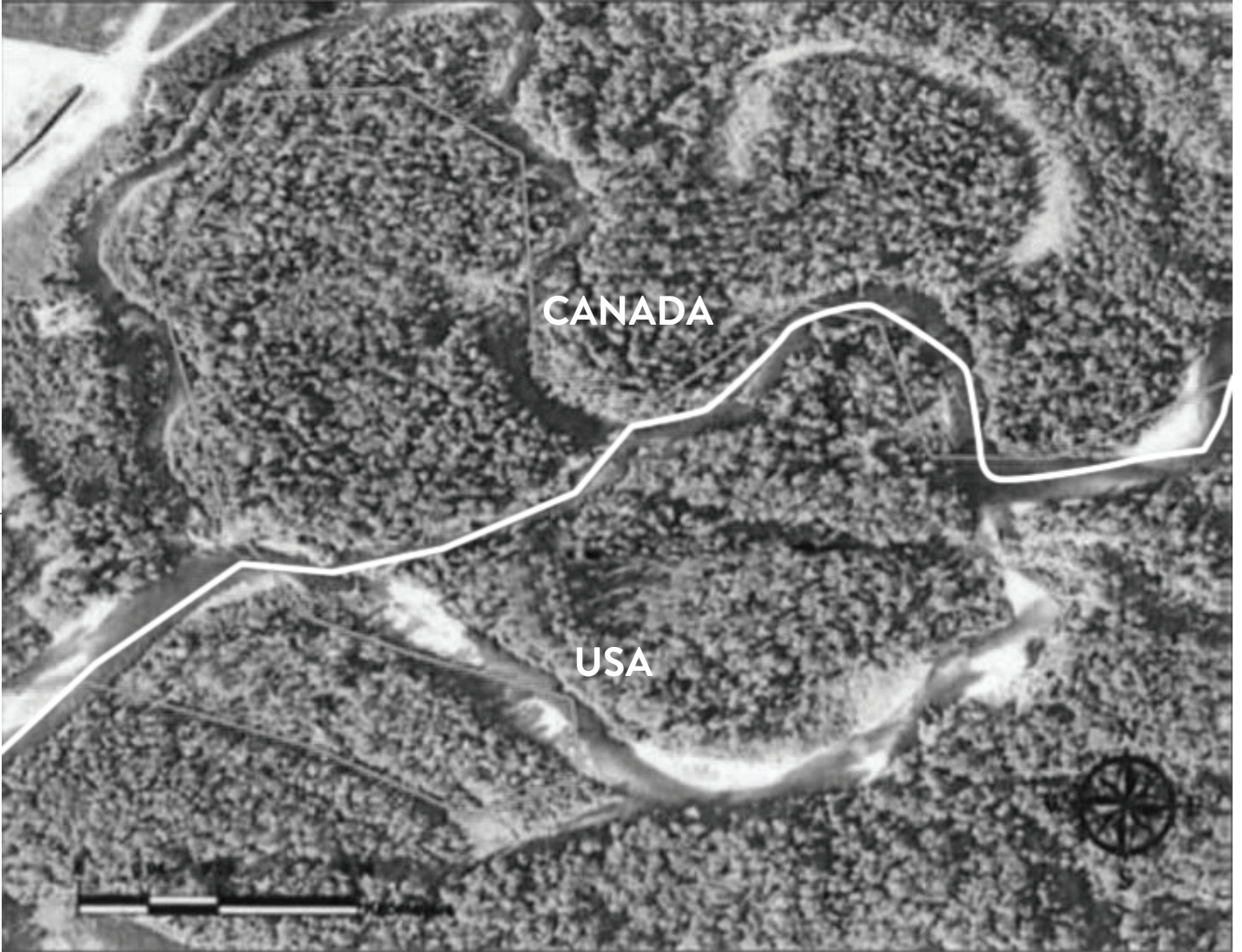
Not far from Hadrian's Wall are the current day conversations regarding Brexit or rather Britain's exit from the European Union. Joining the European Union (EEC) in 1973 marked an important milestone in the idea of shared collective difference for Britain and its neighboring countries. However, in the face of growing tensions regarding the sovereignty and security of the British Nation the withdrawal from the European Union signals a contemporary fortification of its borders. The decision to exit was influenced by an increasingly xenophobic attitude towards immigration, which has become a growing trend in a post 9/11 world.

◀ Fig. 1.3: Barn Swallow Migration Area  
*Ecological boundaries are ones which humans have little to no influence on. The landscape on which plants and animals reside ignores human politics, and territorial constructs. This map shows the traditional area that barn swallows traversed. As seasons change they move between warmer food rich climates.*



# **CANADIAN BORDERS THROUGH TIME**

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## NATURAL BORDERS

The borders that define the boundary between Canada and the United States are in a constant mode of change. As water courses shift and the accuracy of surveying technology improves so too do the finite locations of established borders. In companion with this idea are historical borders which most would not think of as a border at all, but contribute to the impeded movement of people, fostering a sense of inside and outside. What was at one time an accepted border sometimes remains physically as a relic and in other cases just as an oral account. Past borders may at times not be acknowledged as such, despite their effect on the mobility of humans. Glaciation on the North American continent can be regarded as one of these moments; a geological border. This geological event facilitated human migration across the Bearing Straight onto the North American continent, an act previously impossible because of other natural borders. The mass freeze cycle that receded 12,000 years ago changed the boundary conditions that we know and understand today. This event and many others matter to us today because their traces continue to define borders; however, instead of joining countries, today these traces divide.

As the glaciers receded, the massive melt waters rushing across the surface of the continent, in time, caused the formation of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River system. The boundaries of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River drainage basin parallel the boundaries of early versions of Canada, as this network of lakes and rivers permitted the inland exploration of both First Nations and colonists alike. The lakes and rivers became important, as they permitted explorers to navigate deep into the continent,<sup>10</sup> but where they would explore was defined by the water itself. When the boundaries between Canada and the United States were being established this same water network, still flowing today, was used as a landmark to establish where the boundary would be positioned, as its limits were generally understood. It is said however, that in time, as the land rebounds from the weight of the glacial ice, the lakes will drain and the rivers will run dry leaving only traces of what was once a natural geological boundary.<sup>11</sup>

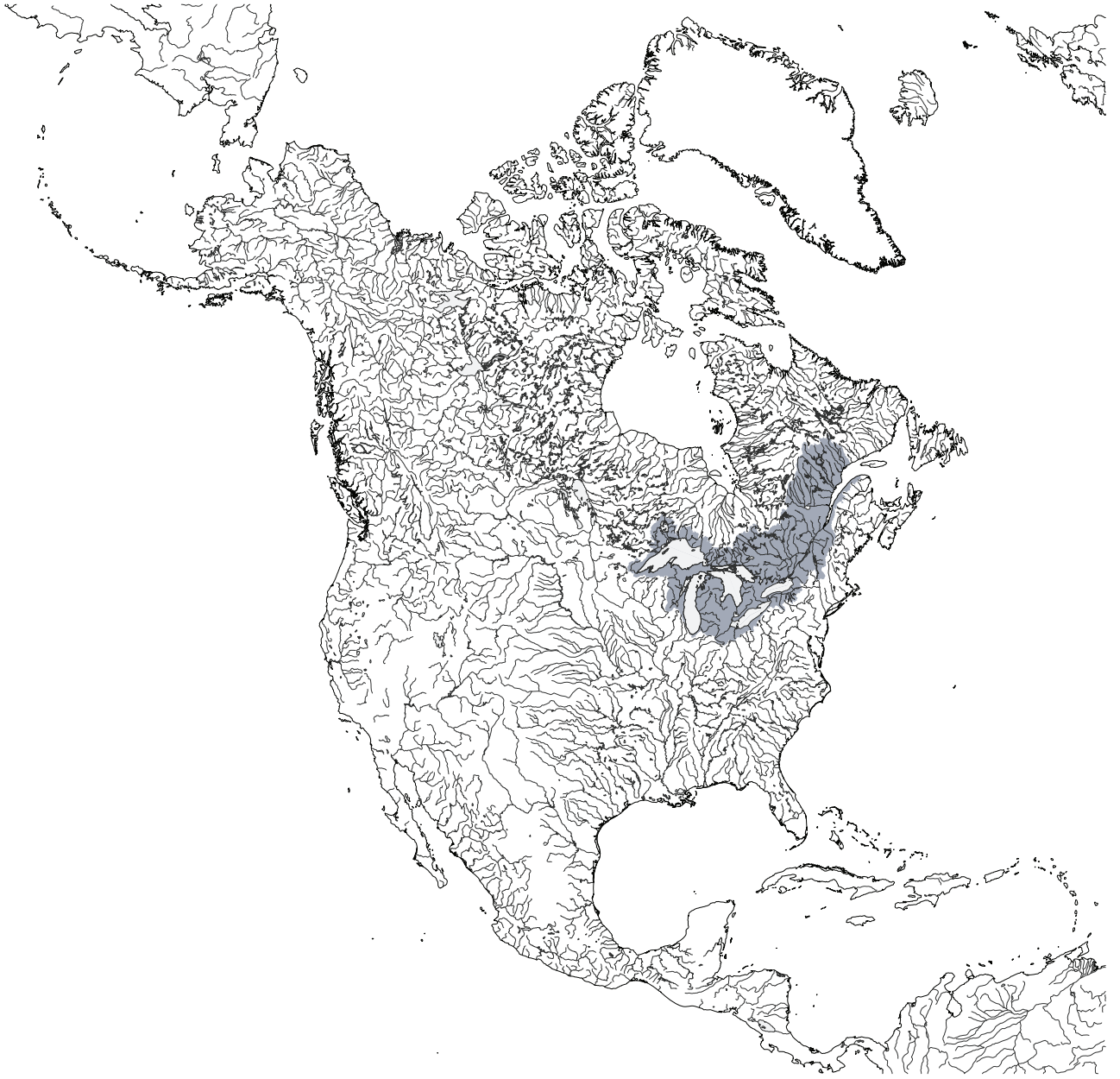
◀ Fig. 2.1: An image contained in the International Boundary Commission report from 2010, showing the change in river course of the St. Francis river. The international boundary as it is defined in the Treaty of Paris followed the centerline of this river and as it changes, it maintains the traces of the old river.





◀ Fig. 2.2: Pleistocene Epoch Glacial Ice Limits

The Pleistocene Epoch brought with it massive sheets of glacial ice which covered a large portion of Canada. This glacial ice had a significant effect on the landscape across Canada, leaving scars and waterways as the planet warmed and the ice sheets receded. The glacier had a significant effect on boundary conditions as time progressed, creating a land bridge which allowed the first people to ever step foot on the continent to cross over the Bearing Strait. Today the scars which remain of the melting ice water across the surface of the earth in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River region define the boundary between Canada and the United States.





◀ Fig. 2.3: Great Lakes - St Lawrence River Drainage Basin

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River drainage basin is in itself a boundary. The topography of the landscape defines the territory within these boundaries. The water courses and channels have significantly influenced the form and location of Canada as it is today, allowing First Nations and settlers alike to traverse throughout. The first genesis of the country's boundaries parallel the borders of this drainage basin.

### Description of the USA-Canada Border from The Treaty of Paris (1783)<sup>12</sup>

*On November 5 the British and American commissioners agreed upon the following line: From the north-west angle of Nova Scotia, viz., that angle which is formed by a line drawn due north from the source of St. Croix River to the High lands, along the said High lands which divide those rivers that empty themselves into the River St. Lawrence from those which fall into the Atlantic Ocean to the north-westernmost head of Connecticut River; thence down along the middle of that river to the 45th degree of north latitude, from thence by a line due west on said latitude, until it strikes the River Iroquois or Cataroquy, thence along the middle of said river into Lake Ontario, through the middle of said lake, until it strikes the communication by water between that lake and Lake Erie, thence along the middle of said communication into Lake Erie, through the middle of said lake until it arrives at the water communication between that lake and Lake Huron, thence along the middle of said water communication into Lake Huron, thence through the middle of said lake to the water communication between that lake and Lake Superior, thence through Lake Superior northward of the Isles Royal and Philipeaux to the Long Lake, thence through the middle of said Long Lake and the water communication between it and the Lake of the Woods to the said Lake of the Woods, thence through the said lake to the most northwestern point thereof, and from thence on a due western course to the River Mississippi,*

### Description of the USA-Canada Border from The London Conventions (1818)

*It is agreed that a line drawn from the most northwestern point of the Lake of the Woods, along the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude, or, if the said point shall not be in the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude, then that a line drawn from the said point due north or south as the case may be, until the said line shall intersect the said parallel of north latitude, and from the point of such intersection due west along and with the said parallel, shall be the line of demarcation between the territories of the United States, and those of His Britannic Majesty, and that the said line shall form the northern boundary of the said territories of the United States, and the southern boundary of the territories of His Britannic Majesty, from the Lake of the Woods to the Stony [Rocky] Mountains.*

### Description of the USA-Canada Border from The Oregon Treaty (1846)

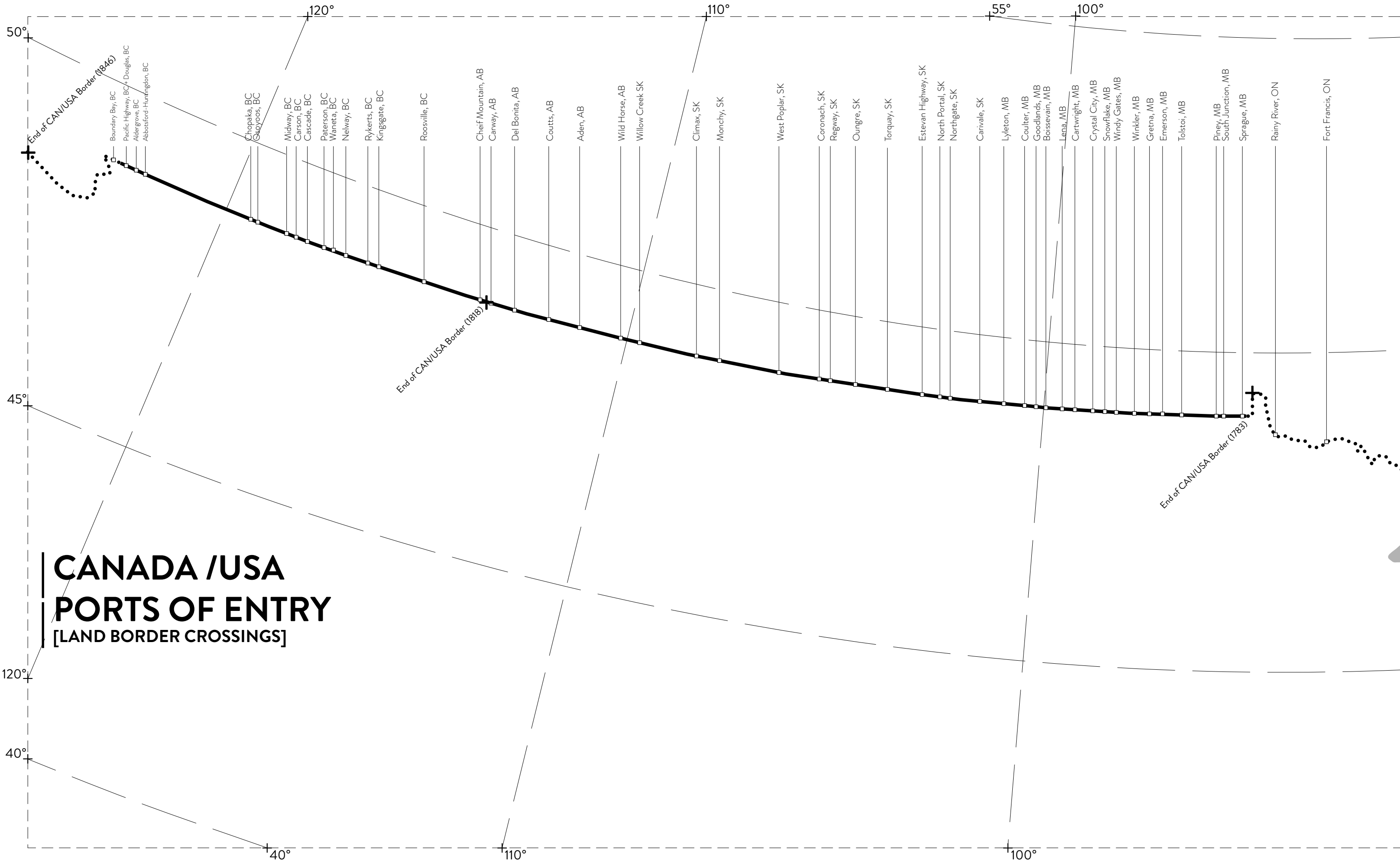
*The Oregon Treaty of 1846 was the final agreement which completed the border separating Canada from the United States from the Atlantic to Pacific Oceans. Later revised due to a dispute, the North West Boundary Survey (1861) adjusted where the boundary met the ocean. From the point on the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude, where the boundary laid down in existing treaties and conventions between the United States and Great Britain terminates, the line of boundary between the territories of the United States and those of Her Britannic Majesty shall be continued westward along the said forty-ninth parallel of north latitude to the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island; and thence southerly through the middle of said channel, and of Fuca's Straits, to the Pacific Ocean.*

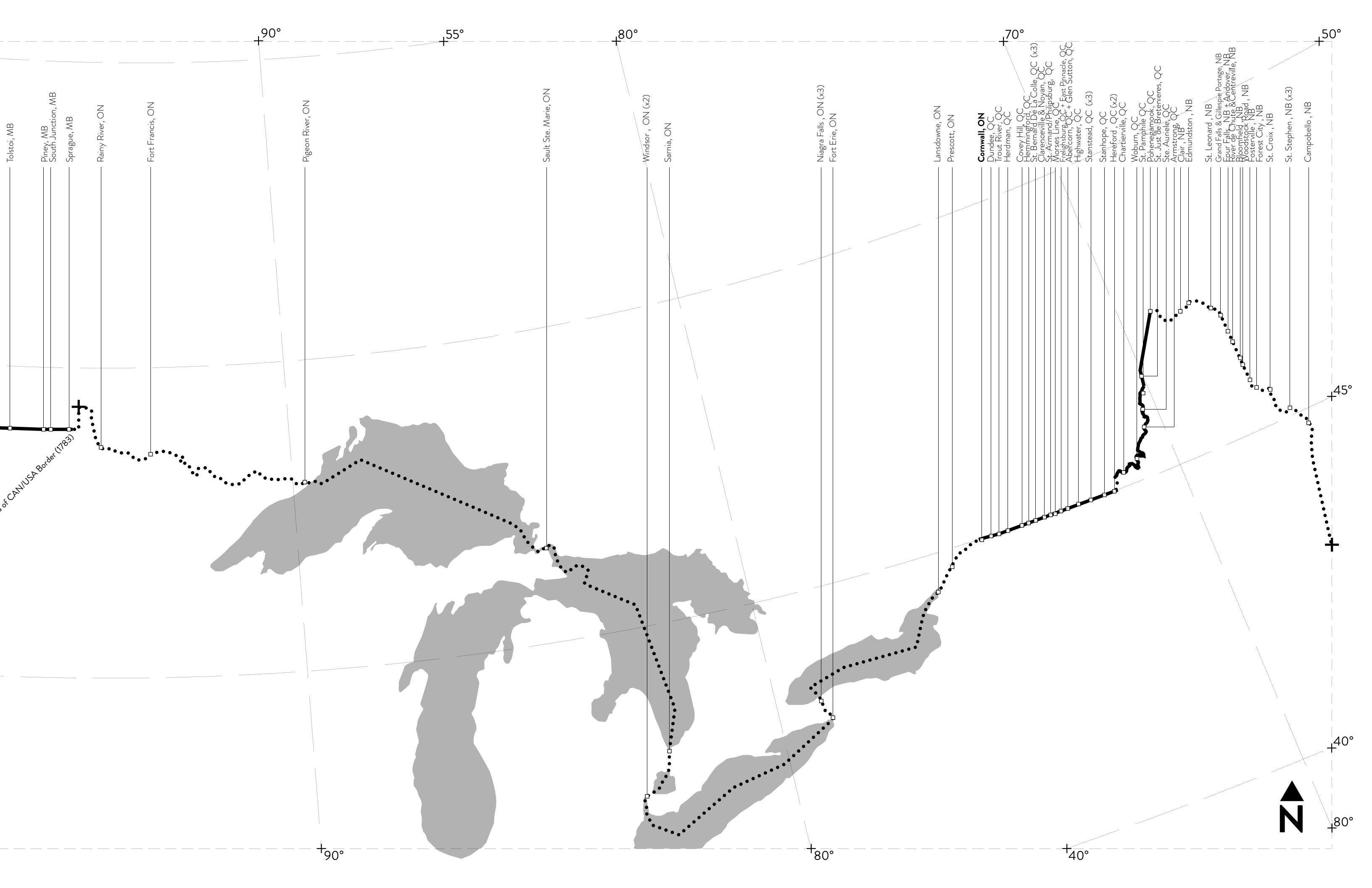
## POLITICAL BORDERS

Most people feel a level of confidence in the permanence of the international border between Canada and the United States. However the border itself is very young. The most iconic section of it extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans was defined in a series of agreements between the two countries, which have required continuous refinement over the years, as development proceeded along either side. Many people refer to it as the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, however it is made up of a series of both natural and imagined points of reference. Even today the piece of land known as Machias Seal Island off the coast of New Brunswick and Maine still remains in dispute as to which country it belongs, attesting to the ongoing genesis of the border.<sup>13</sup> The following are historical excerpts from the three main border definition agreements made between Britain and the United States, which describe in words where the border was agreed to be placed.

◀ Fig. 2.4: This text is extracted from three separate forms of agreement between the British and American Government, where the words used are intended to describe precisely where the border between the two nations would be placed.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 2.5 on the following pages reflects the International border separating Canada from the United States as it is established along the southern edge of Canada. Also indicated on this map are all of the land border crossings (Ports of Entry) that cross this line stretching from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean.







◀ Fig. 2.6: Diagram of a border Port of Entry near Abercorn, QC by author

Eastern Canada is the home to the first European settlements within the country. Along the St. Lawrence River and in what is now Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are settlements and routes shared historically by First Nations and Europeans. Many of the settlements and road networks were established well before the International Border was defined.

This diagram shows how the genesis of the human networks has been impacted by the introduction of the border. Roads are blockaded and properties are bisected to suit the modern version of territorial boundaries.





◀ Fig. 2.7: Diagram of border Port of Entry near Estevan Highway, SK by author

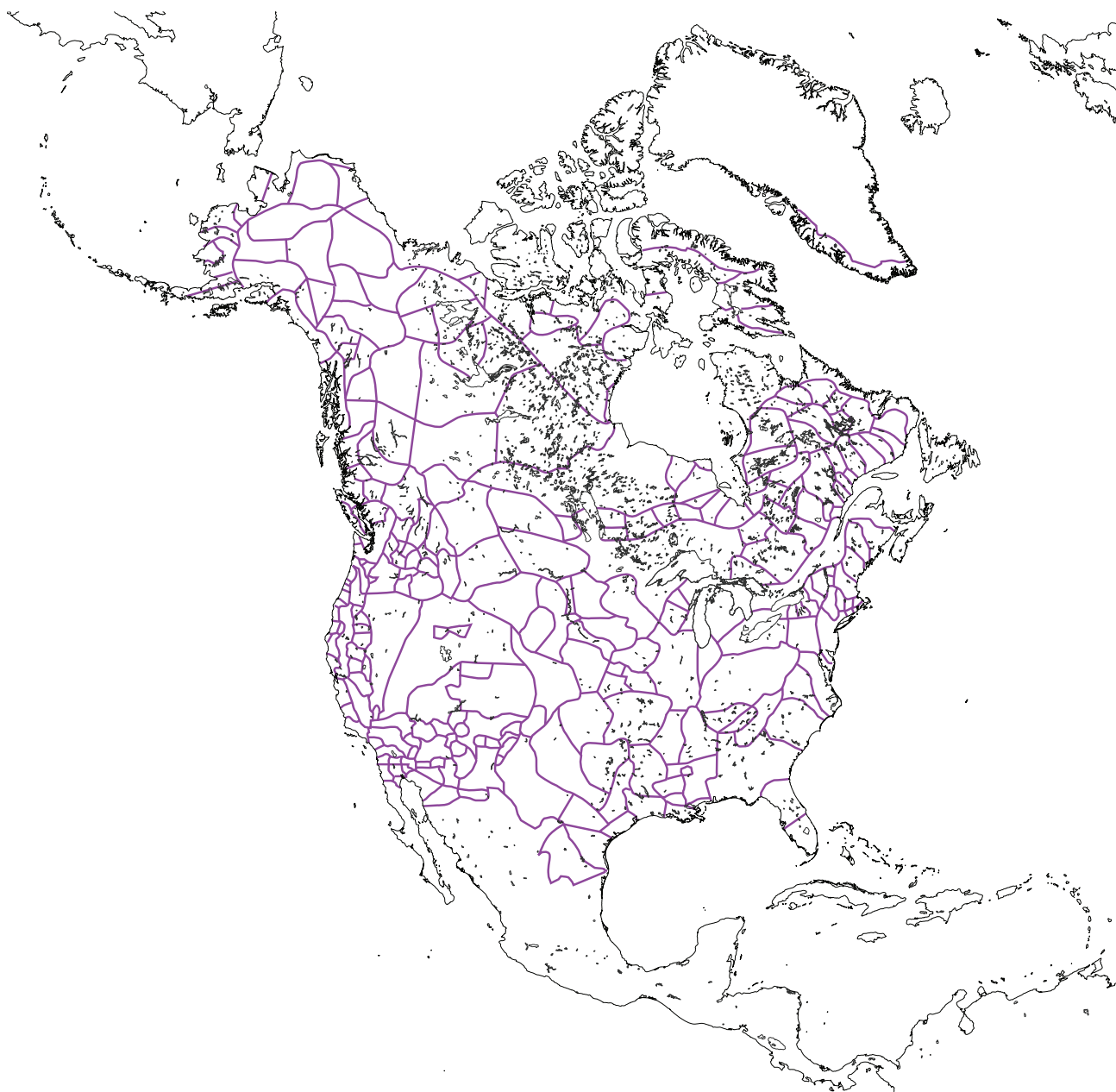
As the Canada - USA border progressed westward, the establishment of road networks and property in remote areas progressed more in parallel with the development of the location of the border. As Canada developed as a nation and the population moved westward property planning followed suit.

This diagram shows how road networks and property parcels have a more rationalized relationship to the established international boundary.



◀ Fig. 2.8: International and Intranational Boundaries

As we understand them today, this diagram shows the international and intranational boundaries of the North American continent as it stretches down to Central America. It is interesting to discuss this fabric of boundaries because for many, these boundaries are perceived as strong and enduring. Within the last 200 years however they have changed dramatically. Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to consider what they might look like 200 years from now.



◀ Fig. 2.9: Pre-contact First Nation language map.

Of importance to consider is the idea of multiple readings of the idea of “border.” The boundaries and territory discussed in the previous graphics represents the idea of political boundaries or natural ones. This map however shows something different. It shows language areas. Pre-colonized North America shares little of territorial boundary conditions as they may have existed. Instead they could be defined by language. As prepared by Mithun et al.:

*“North America north of Mexico shows tremendous genealogical diversity. It is home to perhaps 275 distinct languages so far as is known, and around 55 genetic groups. A rough impression of the diversity can be grasped from Figure 1, which represents the approximate ranges of tribal territories at the earliest times for which information is available. Divisions between territories are schematic; boundaries were not usually sharp and not all areas were occupied.”*<sup>14</sup>



# NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Identity and ideology play an important role in the development of a nation. The idea of a shared narrative of what connects people together in agreement is fundamental to maintaining the collective of a nation. This ideology is often referred to as nationalism, an inclusionary and exclusionary dialectic. As D.V. Kumar writes:

*“The very process of including people who share the same objective and subjective characteristics in political community of nation inevitably excludes those who do not share these... (It) can have enormous emancipatory potential in terms of mobilizing oppressed, disadvantaged and deprived groups under the rubric of nationalism and motivating them to struggle for their own social, economic and political betterment...”*<sup>15</sup>

National identity can be thought of as a set of fundamental elements that contribute to the commonly shared values of a group of people, and it is this set of values that bind them in collective understanding. These elements include common understandings, aspirations, sentiments, rights and obligations and any other number of ideas that act to distinguish the group.<sup>16</sup> The act of distinguishing plays an important role in terms of identity as it is this distinction that establishes who is among the membership as well as identifies those who are outside of it.<sup>17</sup>

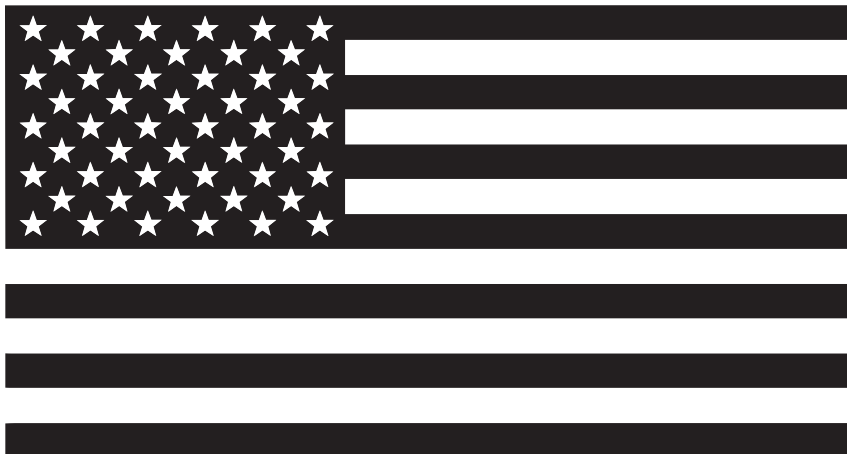
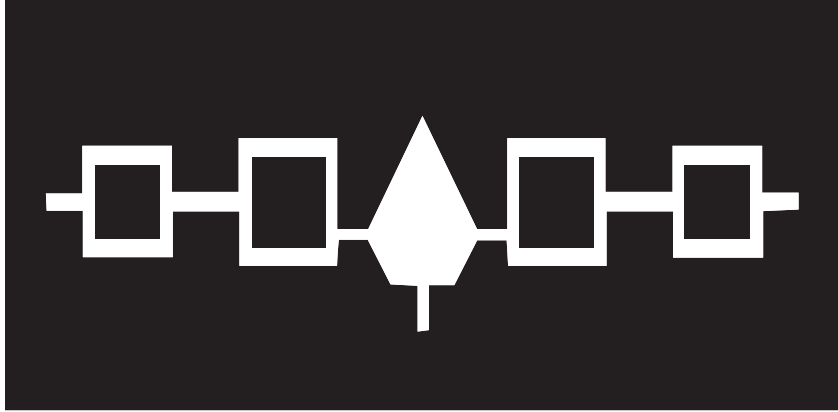
This collection of social values, in the western world, can be found within a series of well-defined territorial boundaries. This territory, however, cannot be just any territory; the boundaries must contain a place holding sacred meaning, a place of history and myth.<sup>18</sup> For many, the land and territory upon which they live is filled with layers of historical significance. It is their motherland or the cradle of their personal history. For many it is the place their parents grew up and possibly lines of people who are part of the family who had passed on years before but their memory still persists through story.

However, within the western world the idea of a nation and identity is also associated with a community of laws and institutions.<sup>19</sup> Nationalism can be seen as a cultural institution, a cultural entity which is rooted in political ideology. Indivisibility of the nation is at the root of the political will that is enacted on the people who share it.

Territorial and legal-political identity as a method of nation building was a predominately western conception. Eastern European areas and territory that now covers much of Asia often found nations built along ethnic or familial lines. Parental lineage, language and customs were often accepted as the basis of understanding the people who were within the clan or group versus those who were not. Identity and nation were historically connected through ethnic backgrounds, including FN clans along

▲ Fig. 3.1: Canadian Parliament, Ottawa Ontario

◀ Fig. 3.2: Canadian War Memorial, Ottawa Ontario



matriarchal lines. Summarizing these two types, the formation of nations can be thought of within the following two frameworks:<sup>20</sup>

- 1) Civic territorial
- 2) Ethnic genealogical

Despite the different types of national models, each have common ideals. Anthony D. Smith <sup>21</sup> lists the fundamental features of national identity as follows:

1. A historic territory, or homeland
2. Common myths and historic memories
3. A common, mass public culture
4. Common legal rights and duties for all members
5. A common economy with territorial mobility for members

As the contemporary world is divided into nations, the act of dividing suggests a difference. Implicit with this is the desire to identify what that difference is and how others have their own. The nation implies individual history and destiny and within that nation is a hierarchy of social power and control to which a certain population is subject to participate in. These elements of national identity were not lost on the political leaders in Canada's early years of development as a nation. It became important for Canada to create an image for itself and for its people, one which represented its roots and reflected its place.

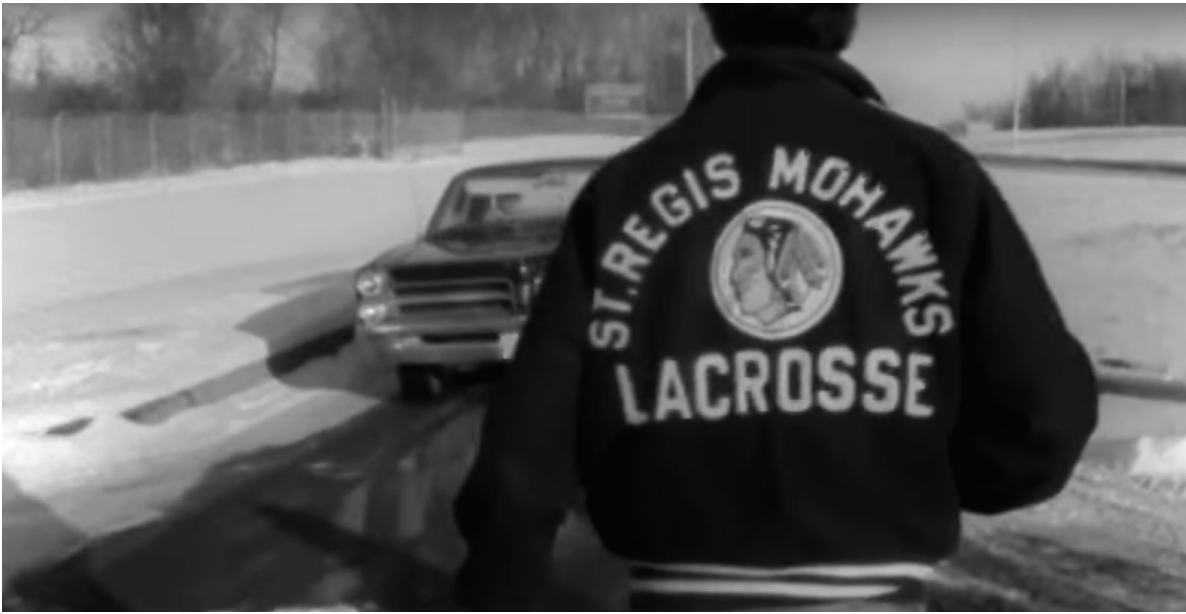
◀ Fig. 3.3: Three National Flags:  
Iroquois-Six Nations  
Canada  
United States of America

As colonists landed on the shores of what would eventually become Canada, they were greeted by what they saw as a new land full of resources and opportunity. The settlers set to work establishing themselves in the new land in spite of the communities which already existed there.

*"...It's young society was forced to reconcile the ways of the motherland-including its ideas of establishing an impressive governmental and religious presence in the colony-with the realities of a naïve society, an immature economy and a harsh and threatening environment. Social Structures and buildings alike reflect the difficult process."*<sup>22</sup>

In parallel, the American Revolution led to the perceived need to rapidly construct identifiable icons which began to establish the idea of a nation. After the Treaty of Paris ended the American Revolution in 1783 and the subsequent agreements that defined the limits of each country a national capitol building had begun construction.<sup>23</sup> The Canadian Parliament began construction in 1859 on the heels of the reconstruction of the Palace of Westminster in London which would be completed in





1860. Both of these buildings represent an important idea of national identity in that they were both constructed in the Gothic Revival style promoted by British national John Ruskin, whose writings and critiques on architecture at the time had a significant influence on the social impact of architecture. He promoted the Gothic Revival saying that the renewal of society can be realized through the renewal of art and through craft.<sup>24</sup> The expressive quality of Gothic architecture was one method through which the people of a nation could collectively reinforce their identity. This effort to establish a British identity had attempted to erase the historical layers that existed already through French Canadian and First Nation identity as the defining character of the landscape.

In Canada, the facilities constructed to act as Ports of Entry (POE) are as much an extension of the nation and its ideologies. Port of Entry land is Crown land and typically owned and operated by a government Crown corporation. Since the country was first formed, transferring goods across its border was a way to generate revenue.<sup>25</sup> Taxation on imported and exported goods has been common practice throughout the world for centuries. Prior to 2003 border crossing points into Canada were operated by “Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.” In the post 9/11 world the responsibility for operating Canadian POEs changed. On December 12, 2003 Canada Customs was separated from the Revenue Agency and combined with the Canada Food Inspection Agency, Citizenship and Immigration and Customs becoming the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and governed by the CBSA Act. Today CBSA operates over 1,200 offices and employs nearly 14,000 people providing services relating to international movement of people and goods from abroad into the country.<sup>26</sup>

▲ Fig. 3.4: Screen capture from “You are on Indian Land” a 1969 NFB film

◀ Fig. 3.5: American football game during the national anthem

▼ Fig. 3.6: Hockey game during the national anthem

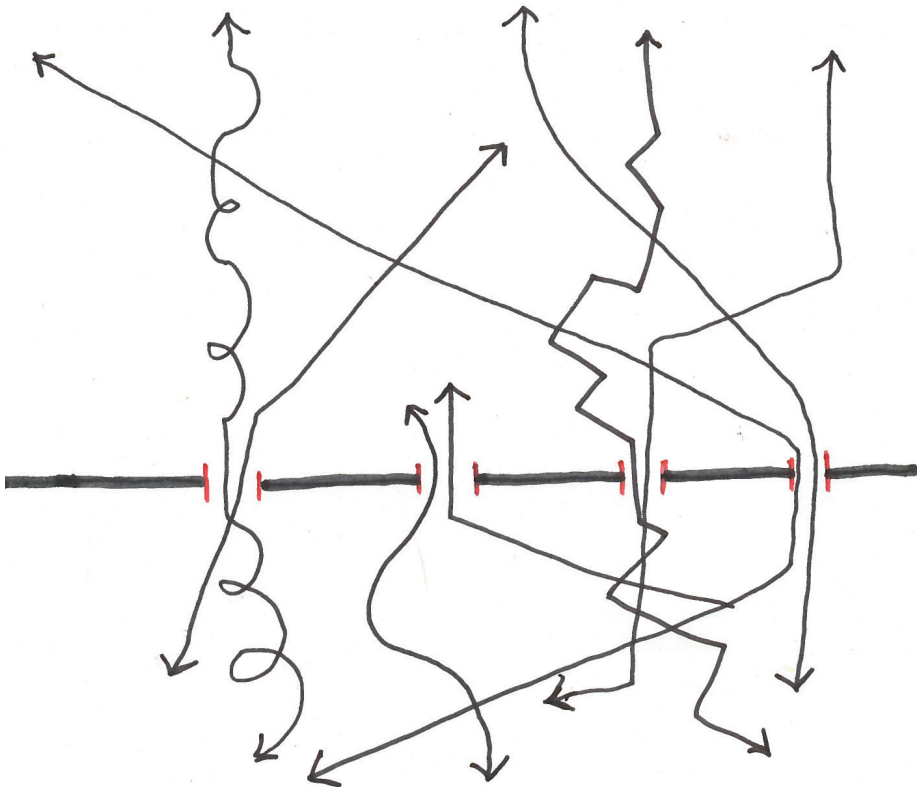
*“No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of unknown soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely because they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them.”*

*-Benedict Anderson<sup>27</sup>*



# THRESHOLD







In 1909 philosopher Georg Simmel wrote an essay titled “Bridge and Door”. The essay describes the notion of the human manifestations of the bridge and the door. He states that each signifies fundamentally different ideas of connectedness.<sup>28</sup> He states that only humans have the right to separate and this is in opposition to nature which has been granted an ability to connect. By nature humans want to connect but while they tend to separate, without that separation a connection cannot be made. Human made pathways, he says, are the first attempt by humans to connect and the first person to build a path between places performed a great human achievement. The construction of a bridge is the zenith of this act, because

*“...the human will to connection seems to be confronted not only by the passive resistance of spatial separation but also by the active resistance of a special configuration. By overcoming this obstacle, the bridge symbolizes the extension of our volitional sphere over space.”<sup>29</sup>*

The door however, in contrast, is much richer as it has the ability to express separateness and unity at the same time. What fuels the urge to connect is our fantasy for it. In wide open space we do not fantasize, but when disconnection is felt we aspire to join.

◀ Fig. 4.1: Diagram of border threshold movements by author

If we look across the globe the realities in which borders exist varies greatly. It is true however to say that each of them defines a threshold. Sometimes constructed but often times imagined, these borders act as a barrier, but one which is porous. It is at these porosities viewed as “ports of entry” that the values which are contained within the boundaries of the nation are imposed on those who enter. Often the places that are constructed as POEs are established to determine rejection or affirmation, they are places that act as gateways to a promised land or otherwise. In light of the abundance of trans-border migration, coupled with an increased social paranoia and rapid advancement of technology, human movement from country to country has become an increasingly anxious and difficult action through these established thresholds. These constructed places are often rife with rhetorical impositions of architectural persuasiveness. These analogies to strength and power, however, are viewed only in relation to the moment in time when they are built.

The boundary that separates Canada from the United States contains 177 POEs on land.<sup>30</sup> These can be thought of conceptually as doorways or thresholds through which access is granted. The free movement between places is dramatically altered as the result of ideological necessity defined by the people



who are contained within its limits.

A threshold can be thought of as a space where you leave behind the previous experience, or a place where you cross to the unknown and experience the new. Often the threshold is a distinct infinitesimal line, one which divides this side from that side. Despite a border's intention to separate space, the human desire to move between them establishing connectedness still exists.

Along the Canadian border are in excess of 8,000 monuments which act as markers to delineate the agreed border between Canada and the United States.<sup>31</sup> A variety of types of markers exist. Some are stone obelisks on (or approximately at) the understood location of the border and others are domed markers on land which act as reference points for boundaries over water.

The obelisk has roots dating back thousands of years rooted in Egyptian culture. Emulated by the Greeks and adapted by the Romans, boundaries (terminus) and routes were demarcated by a four sided stone rising out of the ground to indicate an established limit or as a wayfinding sign.<sup>32</sup> These stones were often placed ceremoniously:

*"The ancients when they were to draw up boundaries, would set the same stones upright on the solid ground near that place where a ditch had been made for the stone to be set up permanently and they would anoint it and crown it with bands of wreaths. In the ditch then in which they were going to place it, they sacrificed, and when the victim had been set fire to with a torch they poured blood into the ditch and threw incense and fruit into it as well as some beans and some wine, it is the custom to offer to terminus"*<sup>33</sup>

As the excerpt indicates boundary stones contained an offering to the god Terminus who was the god of boundaries. In parallel with this the herm is another device used by the Romans, which was a vertical stone often adorned with a carved male head figure and a phallus.

In many ways the obelisk is a marker of power and place. It indicates an identifiable point for a great distance around and is easily acknowledged by any passerby. The obelisk contains within it an easily decipherable language for what it is. The form of the obelisk is translated in literal and figurative ways in building forms even today. Often the tall vertical element is incorporated into public infrastructure buildings which act as centering devices (i.e. clocktower or city hall) and contain the basic form of iconic landmark. This can be seen in Washington DC at the Washington monument itself, the tallest object on the National Mall.

What many of the markers along the Canada and United States Border fail to do is to define place. Designing a boundary marker as an object of material culture is simple in that it already

◀ Fig. 4.2: Obelisk found in a wooded area along the 45th parallel in Akwesasne First Nation territory





has deep historical relevance, but as an object it can contain a greater level of meaning. Along the Canadian border the marker is usually made from stone or steel and often contains some crest, a plaque or the words Canada or United States engraved on the surface. The marker tells little about its own history, or about where it sits or about how it got there or about the reality that it may not be there one day.

◀ Fig. 4.3: Washington Monument,  
Washington D.C.



# STANDARD PORTS OF ENTRY

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▲ Fig. 5.1: Aden, AB

▲ Fig. 5.2: Boisevain, MB

▼ Fig. 5.3: Windsor, ON

▼ Fig. 5.4: Campobello, NB







▲ Fig. 5.5: East Hereford, QC



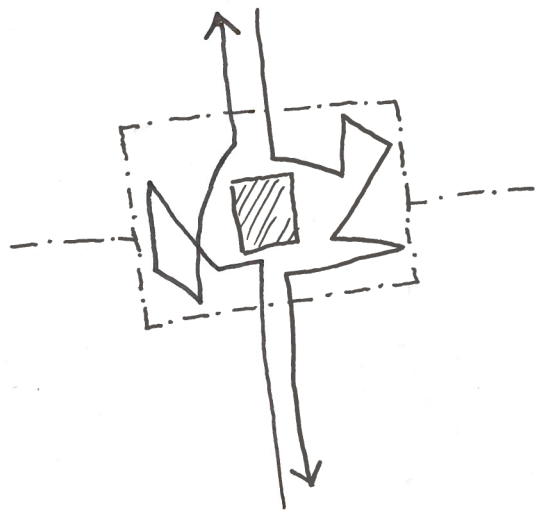
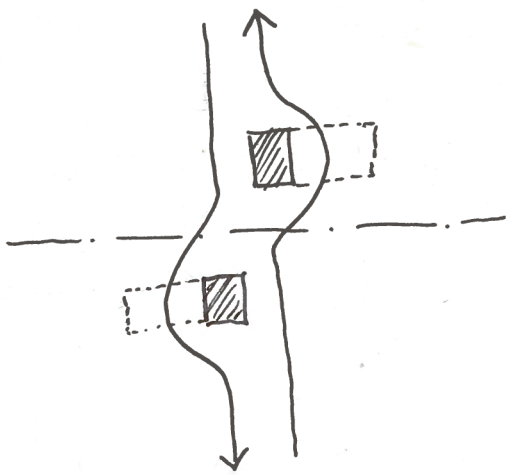
▲ Fig. 5.6: Fort Francis, ON

▼ Fig. 5.7: Coronach, SK



▼ Fig. 5.8: Emerson, MB





When entering Canada from any other country every person must legally enter through a POE. At these ports every person must present a form of identification, usually a passport and declare if any controlled items are being brought in with them. As mentioned in the previous chapter ports within Canada are operated by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). CBSA are the operators of the three main type of traveler processing facilities; Land Ports of Entry, Air Ports of Entry, and Ferry Ports of Entry. They are also responsible for controlling commercial imports into the country. Each of the POEs exists for the purpose of processing people and goods coming into the country. Each type of POE emphasizes a certain mode of traffic. Airports are designed for processing mostly foot traffic, land border crossings are designed to process people, commercial imports and livestock, each of these usually in vehicles and ferry ports of entry are designed to accommodate a mixture of both foot and vehicle traffic. The type of POE that this thesis focuses on is the land border crossing. This section describes the archetypal example of a border crossing as it is found along the border between Canada and the United States and parallels many POE border conditions the world round.

◀ Fig. 5.9: Diagram of flow patterns across existing and imagined Ports of Entry buildings by author

The boundary that separates Canada from the United States, is eight thousand eight hundred and seventy one kilometers long. Of that, five thousand and sixty one kilometers crosses land and three thousand three hundred and eighty kilometers crosses water.<sup>34</sup> The boundary along Canada's southern edge is five thousand nine hundred and sixty-six kilometers long; two thousand eight hundred and seventy eight kilometers over land and three thousand and eighty eight kilometers over water. Along the border there are one hundred and seventy seven POEs, five of which cross into Alaska leaving one hundred and seventy two which cross along the southern border. Overall this provides an average of one port of entry along this line every thirty five kilometers. Figure 2.5 shows the geographic arrangement of each of these ports along the southern border between the two nations. This map shows that although there is an average of one crossing every thirty five kilometers, how they are arranged geographically relates to the history of the border, geographical features and the dispersion of people through time than it does to even distribution. As figures 5.1-5.8 show, the context and scale of land border crossings changes relative to where they fall along this threshold. In some conditions the POE is a building the size of a house and is intended to accommodate very infrequent traffic volumes. At other ports the facilities are hundreds of thousands



## Ogdensburg Bridge Crossing (Prescott, Ontario)

2013		2014		2015	
Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles
Passenger	764,391	Passenger	556,847	Passenger	556,847
Commercial	72,150	Commercial	75,787	Commercial	75,787

## Seaway International Bridge Crossing (Cornwall, Ontario)

2013		2014		2015	
Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles
Passenger	2,153,991	Passenger	2,254,166	Passenger	2,202,158
Commercial	76,513	Commercial	65,991	Commercial	65,791

## Thousand Islands Bridge Crossing (Lansdowne, Ontario)

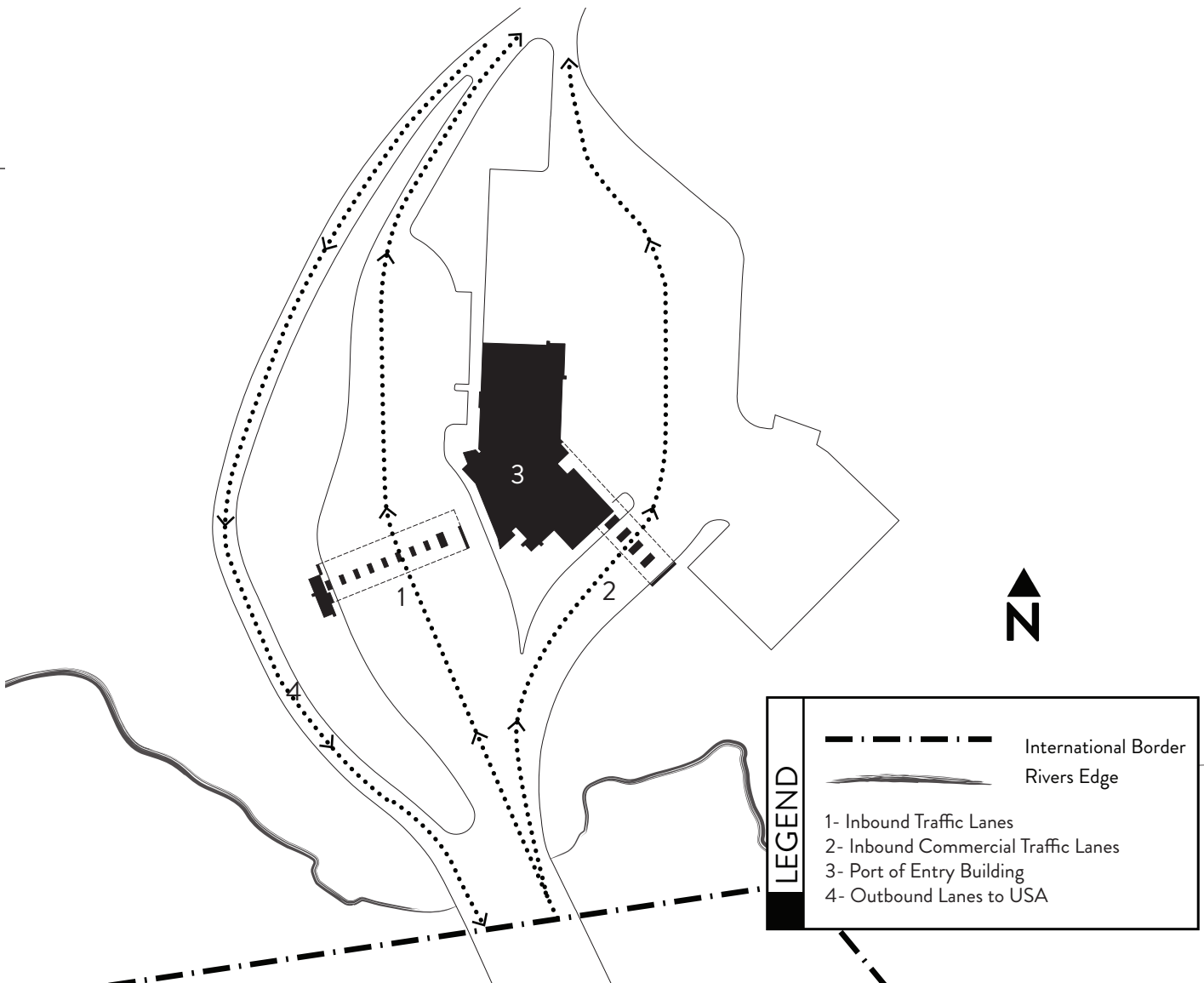
2013		2014		2015	
Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles
Passenger	1,749,272	Passenger	1,696,888	Passenger	1,614,794
Commercial	369,759	Commercial	383,094	Commercial	399,931

# ANNUAL CROSSING STATISTICS OF VEHICLES ENTERING CANADA<sup>35</sup>

2016		2017		2018	
Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles
Passenger	547,525	Passenger	594,515	Passenger	593,616
Commercial	76,181	Commercial	85,161	Commercial	80,584

2016		2017		2018	
Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles
Passenger	2,212,833	Passenger	2,309,597	Passenger	2,302,539
Commercial	67,829	Commercial	71,153	Commercial	75,348

2016		2017		2018	
Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles	Type of Traffic	# of Vehicles
Passenger	1,605,192	Passenger	1,602,414	Passenger	1,580,041
Commercial	398,072	Commercial	393,980	Commercial	389,096



of square feet and process thousands of passenger and commercial vehicles each day. In all cases the types of spaces within the facilities remains similar, only the scale changes.

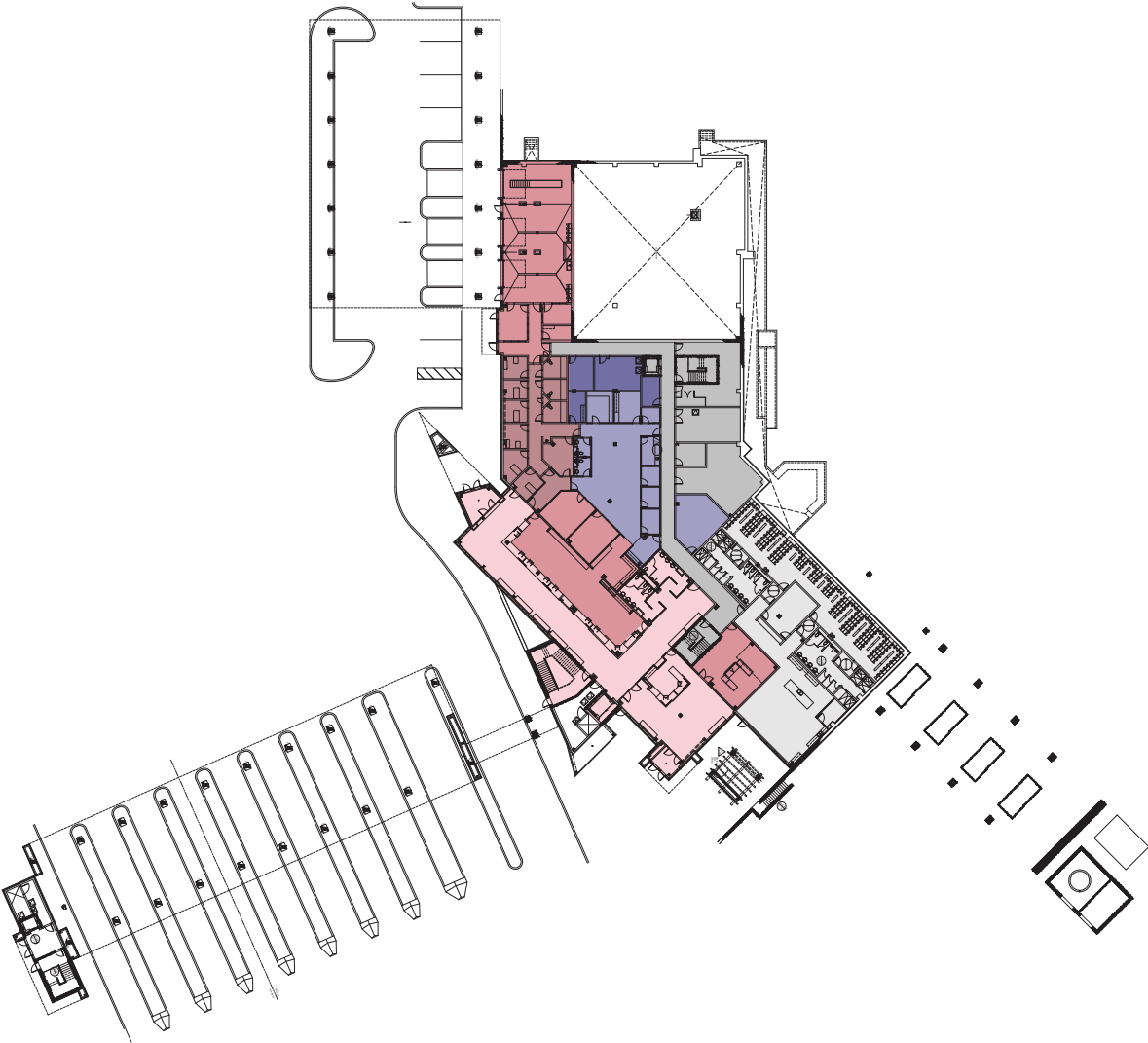
Figure 5.9 shows a diagram of the standard Port of Entry facilities as they interact with the border. Traditionally two separate facilities exist on either side of the border, each developed in isolation of the adjacent side, doubling up programmatic spaces while providing the same function. This arrangement reinforces the divisive nature of a border and facilitates the increased division between the two countries. The diagram on the right in Figure 5.9 proposes an alternative to the standard crossing facility. Rather than the facility being separate while performing the same function, it proposes to combine the program of port of entry into one facility. At the same time it is intended to describe how the port of entry could become a liminal space, one where people slow down the procession through the threshold onto the other side.

A recently completed project representing the archetypal model is the new POE at Lansdowne Ontario in the Thousand Islands region. This building processes over one million six hundred thousand cars and nearly four hundred thousand commercial vehicles each year. This equals almost four vehicles every minute passing through the port. The facility includes an extensive road network that is crucial to the operation of the facilities. The road network includes inbound and outbound roads as well as vehicle inspection space and covered canopy areas for weather protection. Primary inspection happens through booths on the exterior of the building. All of the secondary and tertiary inspection happens within the building. The architectural program also includes office space for different administrative roles within the CBSA. As a function of the facility it also contains search/seizure and holding areas. All of these program elements combined together create a standard port of entry facility, not just within Canada. This is a common typology throughout the world.

The drawings in Figure 5.13 and 5.14 provide a representation of the typical arrangement and scale of spaces that are using the Lansdowne crossing building typology.

▲ Fig. 5.11: Aerial Image of Canadian Port of Entry building at Lansdowne, Ontario

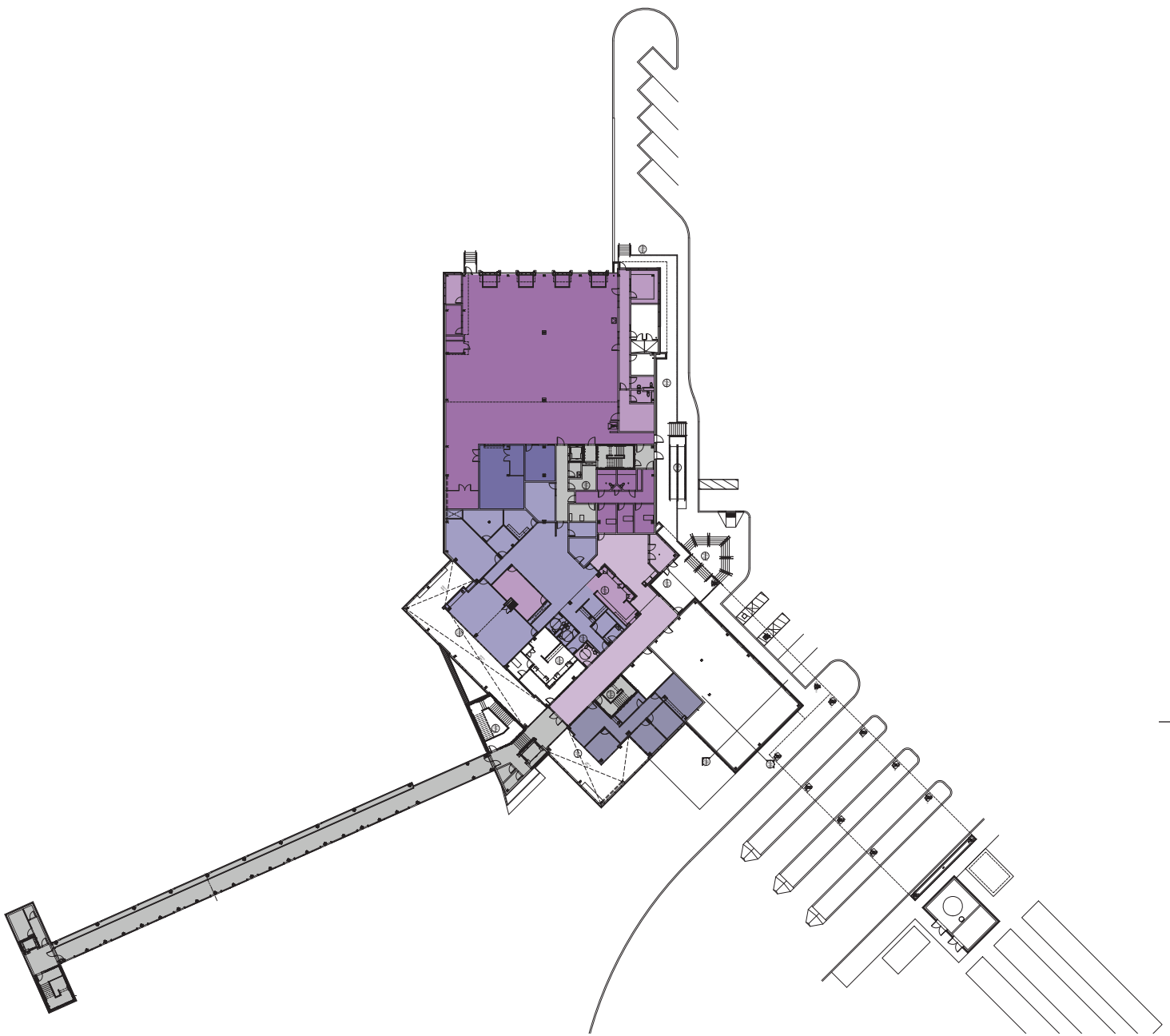
◀ Fig. 5.12: Site Plan of Canadian Port of Entry building at Lansdowne, Ontario



Lansdowne Border Crossing - Level 1 Floor Plan (Fig: 5.13)







Lansdowne Border Crossing - Level 2 Floor Plan (Fig: 5.14)

0 5m 25m 50m

Public Waiting		General Office	
Public Observation		Admin. Office	
Public Interview/Inspection		Seized Goods	
Commercial Waiting		Public Gallery/Dining	
Commercial Observation		Staff Area	
Comm. Interview/Inspection		Circulation/Mechanical	



# DESIGN PROPOSAL

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## THEORETICAL POSITION

The term *deconstruct* in this thesis is intended to convey the notion of an alternate reading of the image of a known architectural type. This is counterpoint to the traditional model discussed in Chapter 5. Deriving first from the work of Jacques Derrida in his book *Of Grammatology* and other works, the idea of deconstruction relates to the reading of words and symbols and how a preferential hierarchy is applied as a mode of understanding what each means.<sup>36</sup> Derrida describes how our understanding of truth through the reading of words and symbols is formed on the basis of certain words and modes of communication being preferred over others. This is to say that we tend to apply preferential value to many terms in language and representation over others (i.e. speaking over reading, constructing over deconstructing); however, it is the preferential order that defines the value of each, and without it, words and signs have no meaning. Furthermore, by looking more closely at the lesser valued components how can this “deconstruction” of a symbol contribute to a deeper understanding of truth or alternate readings?

The theory of deconstruction found its way into the field of architecture, explored by architects and applied through the application of symbols and meaning as a method of trying to derive contemporary ideas in architecture. The topic of deconstruction within architecture has been traversed by a number of architects since the late 1970's. Some of the work of Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi and Daniel Libeskind exemplify these ideas. However, the idea of meaning and symbols has been adapted to suit the realities of architecture as a physical manifestation in contrast to more intangible ideas. It's important to note however that the work of many other architects through time have acquired the label of Deconstructivist (as in style), but have not specifically attempted to address the ideas discussed by Derrida and rather contain aesthetic qualities similar to those architects who have used theory as a tool. This thesis doesn't look at the work of Jacques Derrida directly but instead references the ideas reinterpreted and presented by Peter Eisenman who was at a time in close communication with Derrida.

In his 1984 essay “The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning the End of the End,” Peter Eisenman unravels ideas of meaning and truth in architecture through a reading of architectural artifacts. He writes that since the fifteenth century architecture has had a preoccupation with being timeless, meaningful and true.<sup>37</sup> He describes that three ‘fictions’ have been perpetuated by simulations within the language of architecture.

◀ Fig. 6.1: Abandoned ship lock channel  
Cornwall, Ontario



As Eisenman posits:<sup>38</sup>

The Simulation of Meaning:

Through the use of an already valued architecture, renaissance architects drew upon what was already regarded as valuable in Greek and Roman architecture and through emulation applied an immediate meaning to it through historic simulation.

The Simulation of Truth:

Through various forms of representation architects concluded that architecture's own reality derived from a source outside itself, often paralleling social truth. As with representations of the divine to representations of reason and logic through the Enlightenment, to the time of writing the truth of rationality. Architecture constantly sought to simulate social truth.

The Simulation of the Timeless:

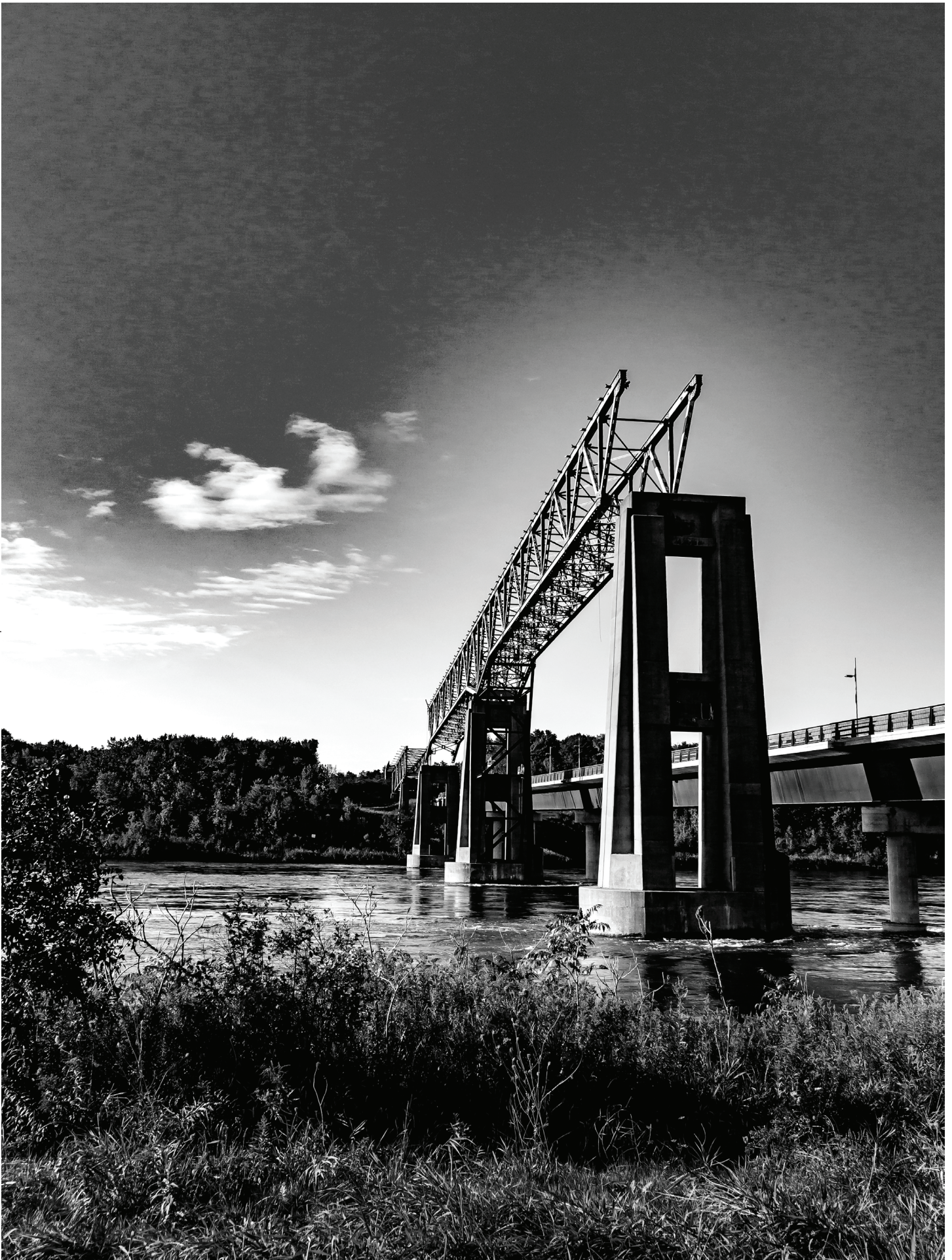
The mid-fifteenth century brought with it the concept of the forward movement of time and with this the establishment of zeitgeist or the overarching spirit of the age. It was believed however that a series of principles defined architecture, and the need to confirm what these were simulated continuity through time

◀ Fig. 6.2: St. Lawrence River at Akwesasne, Ontario

Understanding these three fictions and analyzing their value became tools used by Eisenman as he meandered through the design of a series of proposed projects through the 1980s. In 1994 the Canadian Center for Architecture curated an exhibit on this work and published a companion book titled *Cities of Artificial Excavation* which described the process of how he took these ideas and converted them into proposed projects.<sup>39</sup>

The relationship between his text “The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, The End of the End” and this thesis runs parallel. I propose that the three fictions he proposes - the ones architecture have been obsessed with- would act as statements and used less as a theoretical analytical tool and more as a figurative analytical tool. All of this was used to guide the consideration of an alternate reading of the architectural language of a Port of Entry.







As a parallel comparison the following are descriptions of how most Canada-USA Port of Entry buildings convey a language of control:

#### The Simulation of Meaning (Identity)

Identity plays a critical role in most POEs in that they become the outward face of a border. Any person looking towards a nation from the outside experiences the POE as a first point of contact. Ports are most often located on Crown land and are extensions of the social control measures that are valued by the culture at a national level. The emulation of identity is manifested in the building through architectural means, be it material choices, scale, signage, procession etc. Thus the building as constructed becomes an icon of meaning and representation as determined by the identities contained within the boundaries.

#### The Simulation Of Truth (Threshold)

The idea of truth in the POE building is contained in the ideas that the structure is necessitated by the need to provide a controlling space at a specified interval along the social simulation “border.” Ports or ‘thresholds’ don’t act as stand-alone units but are a part of a network and become a physical manifestation of an imagined line. Within the world many examples exist of borders between nations which allow free movement but the truth at the Canada-USA border is that this border is without free movement. All people from within or without are subjected to its existence, experienced at the constructed threshold.

#### The Simulation of the Timeless. (Borders Through Time)

Timelessness as Eisenman describes it relates to the constant language of architecture and remains consistent from this moment to the first architectural gesture ever created. However timelessness for a border frames a different question – how do you design a building for a series of program elements that are in a constant state of change? Unquestionably any architectural gesture displayed at the moment it was created will sustain its necessity, but for how long? In a constantly changing political climate the needs of border thresholds can expand or implode over a long or short period of time.

◀ Fig. 6.3: High level bridge during demolition and new low level bridge (at right) between Cornwall Ontario and Cornwall Island.



## OBJECTIVES

These three ‘fictions’ are a fundamentally important philosophical framework to understand the underlying objectives of a POE. Bearing these in mind, the objective of this thesis is to understand how the language of the standard POE typology can be altered to reflect a building which contributes to a sense of shared collective difference, through a new program capable of conveying multiple readings. To begin, the following questions were framed and act as referential statements throughout the design process.

Q1. To what extent can we anticipate the genesis of territorial boundaries into the future?

Q2. In what way are the values contained within a boundary imposed upon the individuals who cross the threshold?

Q3. To what degree does the impermanence of borders matter when considering the need for a new typology?

Q4. Can slowing down and cross-programming the traditional border crossing contribute to a space of shared collective difference?

◀ Fig. 6.4: Abandoned high level bridge foundations and new low level bridge between Cornwall Ontario and Cornwall Island.





## PROJECT SITE

The site for the proposed building is located along the St. Lawrence River approximately one hundred kilometers south east of Ottawa, and three hundred and seventy five kilometers north of Albany New York. The “crossing” is located between Cornwall, Ontario and Rooseveltown/Massena New York. The region around these cities is the location of the Canada/USA international border as it runs along the 45<sup>th</sup> line of latitude and intersects with the St. Lawrence River. Mentioned earlier, this segment of the international border was established in the Treaty of Paris in 1783. It is also the point of convergence between two Canadian provinces, Ontario and Quebec. The region is traditional Iroquois/Mohawk Territory and is home to Akwesasne First Nation who have lived there for centuries.<sup>40</sup> Their traditional territory is bisected by the international and provincial borders, the result of which is the First Nation being subjected to the condition of living in two separate political realms. The Jay Treaty of 1794 provides special rights to the Mohawk nation and precludes them from certain restrictions that the border imposes on other peoples, permitting them free movement across the border.<sup>41</sup> At the same time the condition reinforces the idea that borders are an abstract idea and in many ways are not perceived in the same way by all people despite their social reality.

◀ Fig. 6.5: Satellite image of the Three Nations Crossing.

## THREE NATIONS CROSSING

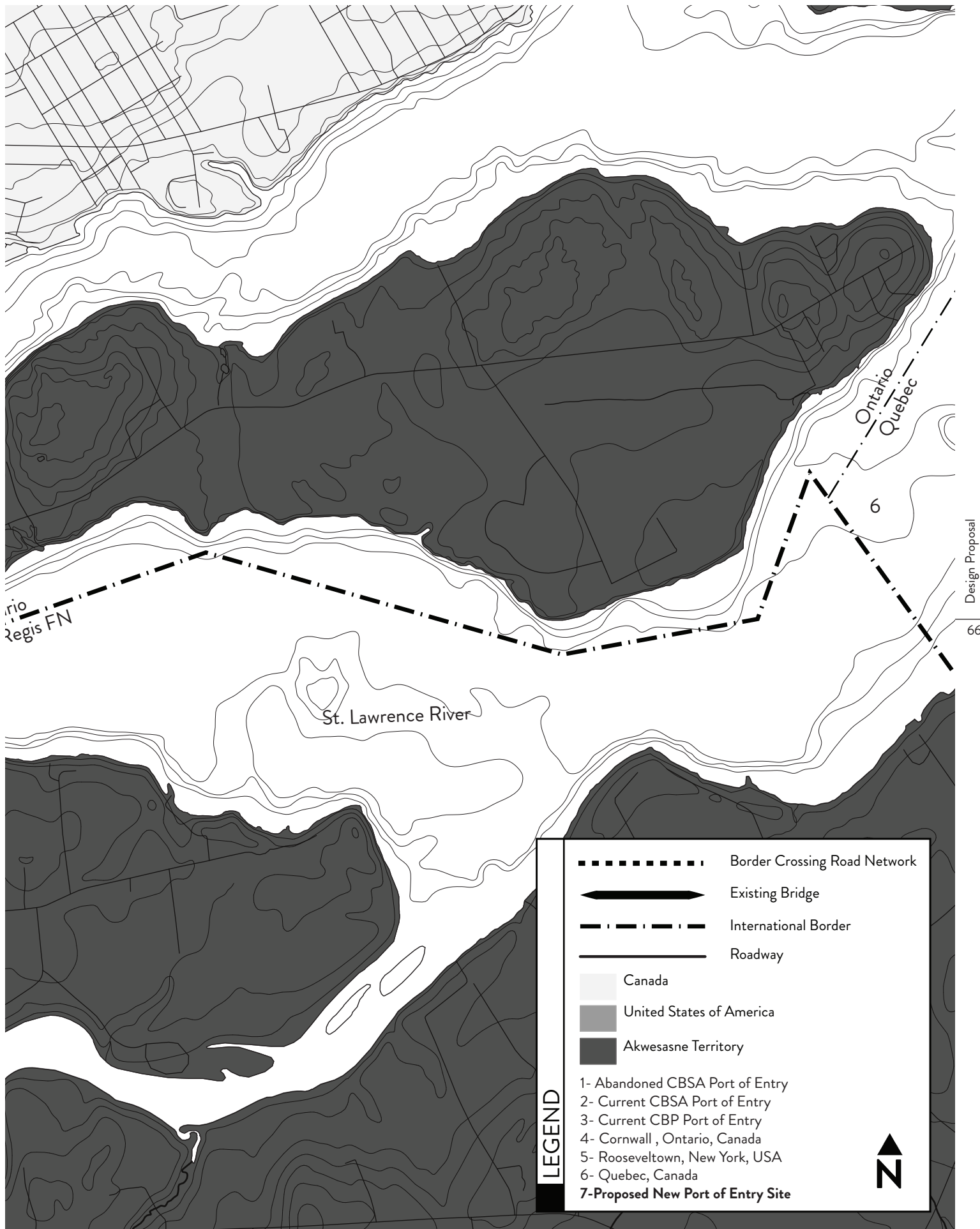
The community of Akwesasne is home to approximately twelve thousand Mohawk <sup>42</sup> (Haudenosaunee) who have a long connection with the Great Lake St. Lawrence River region. The story of their arrival traces back centuries and describes how they had come from the land where the sun sets among the plains, but in time had moved towards the rising sun in search of better land and sources of food.<sup>43</sup> The Iroquois eventually settled in the Oswego River region on the southern shore of Lake Ontario and grew in population building a great nation. As resources began to be depleted the great nation began to split off in search of new land once again. In time six distinct nations and regions were established; The Mohawk, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas and Tuscaroras eventually amalgamating into the Six Nations of the Iroquois. The traditional Mohawk territory prior to European contact occupies what is now seen as the north-east portion of New York State, extending north and bordering along the St. Lawrence and Hudson rivers.

Mohawk territory as it is today in this area consists primarily of Cornwall Island (a large island located in the middle of





Cornwall Ports of Entry - Site Plan (Fig: 6.6)









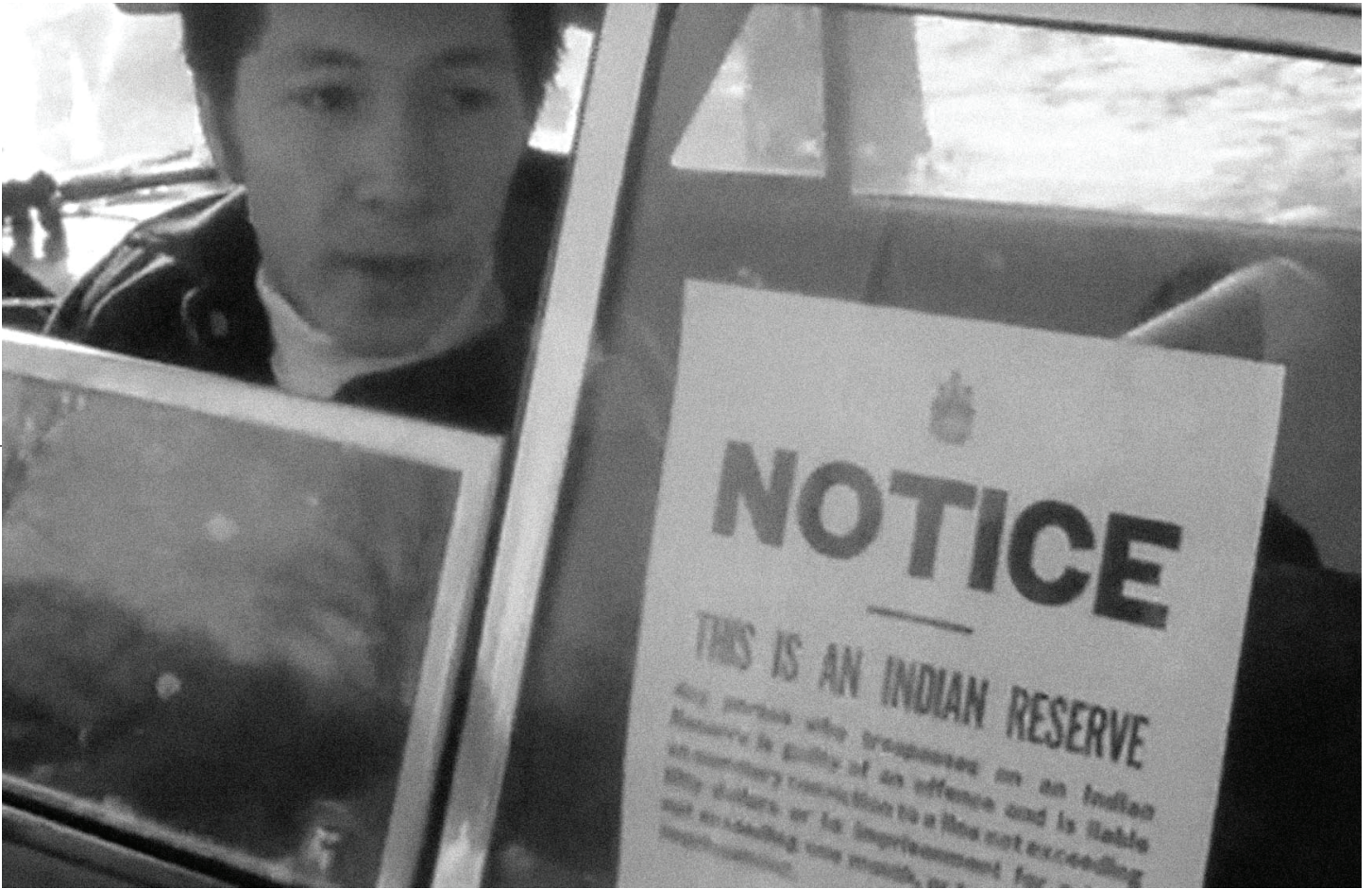
the St. Lawrence River between Canada and the United States), a series of islands further to the north-east down the St. Lawrence River, a tattered series of land parcels near Montreal and a tract of land located along the southern edge of the river extending south into New York. All of this amounts to a fraction of the great nation as it existed before colonization.

The city of Cornwall Ontario began as a British Colony after the American Revolution.<sup>44</sup> The war divided European settlers who were loyal to the British Crown and those who wanted independence. As the United Empire Loyalists fled the newly established and victorious United States, the British government intended to establish a stronger presence along the recently defined International boundary. In 1784 a year after the Treaty of Paris, the area around Cornwall began to be populated by British Loyalists through gifts of land and food rations, given by the Crown with the understanding that land would be converted from brushed hinterland into productive farmland.<sup>45</sup> Spurred on by the existence of the rapids in the river, the condition also necessitated the construction of a ship lock system and in parallel, the power of the water was harnessed for electricity production. Through this development of key infrastructure, the access of industry to both waterways and electricity resulted in the development of pulp and cotton mills in Cornwall which would foster population expansion, resulting in the city as it is today.

As trade began to increase between Canada and the United States, a customs office was established first in 1935 along with a bridge connecting New York to Cornwall Island. By 1958 a bridge completing the road network from the USA into Canada was constructed and traffic began to flow at an increased rate. Following the traditional arrangement the Americans constructed a customs building on their territory south of the river, the Canadians on the north side, both on their respective sides of the line. As with the standard Canadian crossing the customs building was located as close to the border as possible, placing it at the point where the roadway connects the two sides.

It is not known why the decision to bridge across the river was made at Cornwall Island since this necessitated the construction of two separate bridge structures, when constructing one would have been possible further up or down the river system. To speculate however, the decision was likely made to suit geographic and geologic decisions and to accommodate the population living on the island permitting them ease of movement. This condition resulted in a Canadian customs house being located on Cornwall Island - Akwesasne Territory.

◀ Fig. 6.7: Aerial image of Cornwall and Cornwall Island (circa 1960)



The construction of the customs checkpoint resulted in a condition of impeded movement for the Mohawk people living on the territory bisected by this artificial boundary line as they had been used to flowing freely across the river from island to land and back. In the decades that followed the tension created by the new threshold condition on the island yielded a diminishing relationship between the three nations as independent political entities.

Two separate but significant events helped to shape the condition at the border on Cornwall Island:

December 18, 1968:<sup>46</sup>

“...December 18, 1968 the usual heavy traffic between the two countries ground to a stop....we decided to block the bridge...”

-Michael Mitchell

This quote is an excerpt from the 1969 National Film Board film *You Are on Indian Land* a film which chronicles the day members of the Mohawk territory blockaded the road across the island preventing traffic from flowing. The ambiguity that the members of the Mohawk nation felt about what rights they had on their own land and the subjectivity that was imposed on them each day were two of the main concerns that precipitated this activism. The film displays an amazing story that would go on to inspire oppressed minorities around the world. Shamefully the conditions that inspired the blockade and the film are still ongoing issues with no resolution in sight.

June 1 2009:<sup>47</sup>

The fallout from the attack on September 11, 2001 in New York City solidified a level of paranoia and concern for national security that live on even today, the result of which can be seen in a rapid move towards fortification of national boundaries. In the years that followed dramatic changes were made to Canadian and American POEs including overhauls to programmatic requirements, levelling existing port buildings and reconstruction of state facilities to the establishment of a wholly new government agency dealing distinctly with matters of customs and immigration called “border services”. Most important to the Cornwall Island condition was that on June 1, 2009 the Canadian government revised their policy on standard equipment issued to border officers, on that day equipping them with side arms while on duty. As the relationship with CBSA agents and people of Akwe-

◀ Fig. 6.8: Still frame image from “You are on Indian Land” a 1969 NFB film





sasne was at times already tense, the community viewed this as an act of aggression against them. On June 1, the community once again blockaded the road across their land. The Canadian government at this time made the decision that they would no longer occupy Akwesasne First Nation territory and would indefinitely close the port building on the island. On July 13, 2009 the Canadian government opened a temporary border crossing in the city of Cornwall allowing the port to once again open.<sup>48</sup> This would also become the location for the permanent crossing into Canada constructed in the years to follow. This new location did little to help the situation as it then required people of Akwesasne who were coming onto Cornwall island from the USA side to cross the island, enter the checkpoint in Cornwall only to turn back around and return home on the island. Under threat of prosecution and impoundment of their vehicles the people of Akwesasne abide – although this contradicts the Jay Treaty.

Blockades are not an everyday occurrence on Cornwall Island but are a tool of periodic activism necessitated by the injustices experienced by the people of Akwesasne. On visiting the site today an outsider experiences the strange border condition that exists for the people of the three nations, something so common to them. The ground level relationship between all three sides is generally one of respect, and it is evident that Canada Border Services Agency, Customs Border Protection and Akwesasne First Nation are in regular communication with each other. They have grown reluctantly accustomed to the condition and to each other, again out of necessity, as roughly one million of the two million annual trips that happen through the port are made by the people of Akwesasne,<sup>49</sup> which begs the question – if it is the building and the policy that creates this barrier, how can an architectural project be reimagined to facilitate the idea of shared collective difference?

◀ Fig. 6.9: Google streetview image of commercial area road signs on the USA side of Akwesasne territory







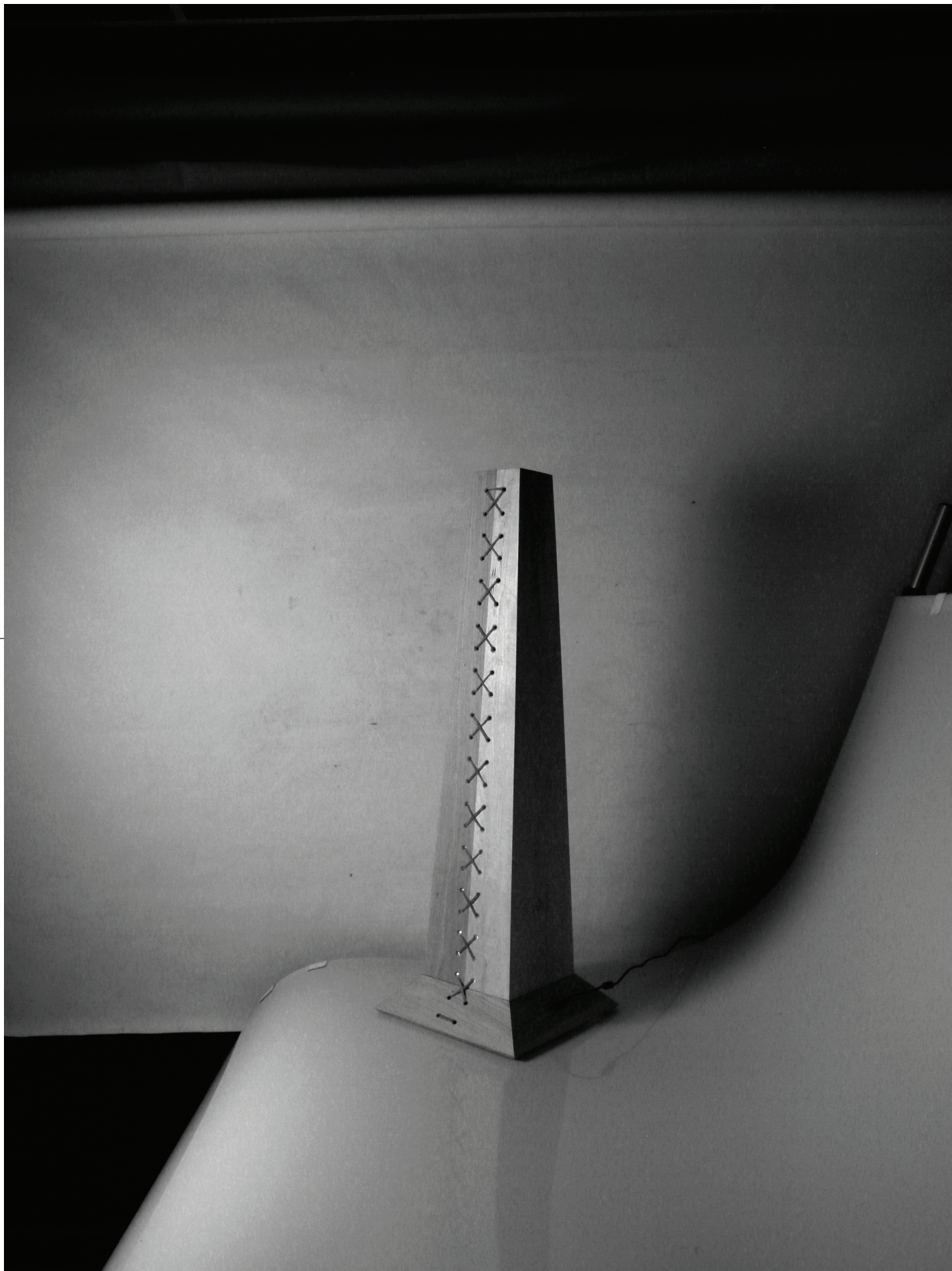
## TRACES

The border delineating Canada from the United States appears as a very simple line, a line that has a sense of permanence. The permanent feeling that it instills is a false sense when you consider its age. The ideas discussed in chapter 2 outline ecological, geologic, human intentional and human unintentional boundaries. The boundaries shown had a significant role to play in the history of why the Mohawk made the region their home and why the city of Cornwall became an urban center.

These images show the final work in an exercise in tracings as a method of creating a graphic narrative of borders, one capable of multiple readings. By drawing the outline and scaling a series of important boundaries that have contributed to the history of creating the proposed “Three Nations Crossing” and layering boundary over boundary it created a palimpsest of maps as a graphic interpretation. A series of three separate tracings were created, one for each identity. The idea of layering alludes to accretion. More layers are added as time unfolds and changes, allowing for the reading of the past and present and at the same time leaving space for the future.

▲ Fig. 6.10: Three lightboxes showing traces of borders cut from Mylar sheets. Model by author

◀ Fig 6.11: Enlarged image of a lightbox showing traces of borders cut from Mylar sheets. Model by author



## CONCEPTUAL MODEL

These images show a wooden obelisk that was created as part of this thesis serving as a conceptual model through the design process. It became a working model for exploring ideas of reading and identity. As the obelisk is one of the few objects that exist to delineate a border it becomes iconic. Across the Canada-USA border in excess of eight thousand markers exist. Across Akwesasne they can be found hidden in bushes along roadsides and in the front yards of homes throughout the community. The work in this model explores the idea of conveying a feeling of history or describing the place that it marks and that it is a part of a much larger network of markers, telling the story of a nation on a site at the convergence of three nations.

This obelisk takes its form from the International Boundary Commission standard for new obelisks but is scaled down by half. The object is made of three distinct wood species: maple, cherry and yellow birch, each representing a distinct nation. The base is made from birch and is intended to represent the Mohawk Nation, the material that touches the ground, the nation that has deepest connection to the earth and the material that the other two are perched upon. The maple and cherry rise out of the birch base and make two halves of the obelisk shaft. Like a clam shell they are split down the middle. The seam between the two halves represents the idea of the border and is connected through stitching. A stitch of rawhide weaves its way from the yellow birch base up both sides of the object crossing and solidifying both pieces in place creating a cohesive whole. Within the obelisk is a series of layered Mylar sheets of border tracings that are illuminated through glass within the base.

Through multiple subtle layers the obelisk is converted from a blank object to one containing historical reference to what it is delineating – the Three Nations Crossing.

◀ Fig. 6.12: Wooden obelisk conceptual model, containing light boxes of local maps inside. Model by author





## PROPOSED LOCATION

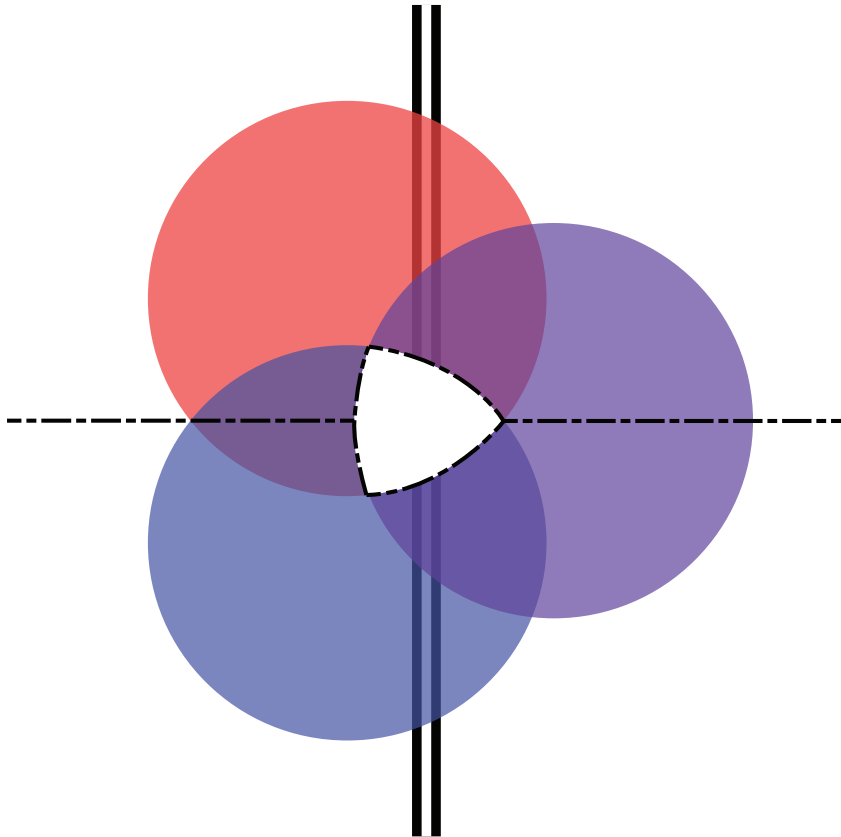
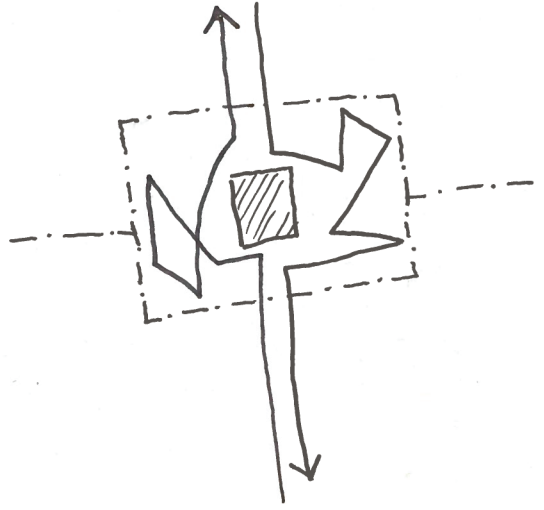
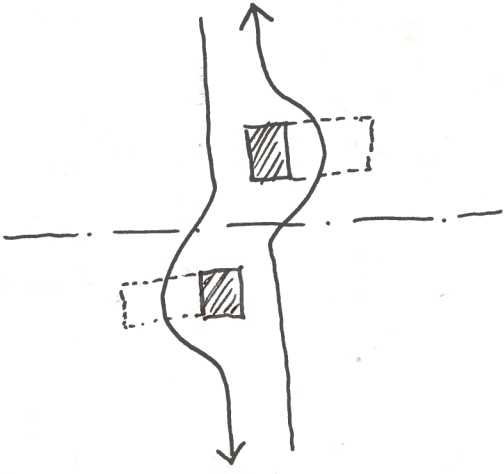
This Port of Entry was chosen because it draws into question some the fundamental principles (Eisenman's meaning, truth and history) that a POE building usually displays. Considering this, the building can be tested to address these complexities, creating a new architectural language through a passive *deconstruction* of what a border crossing is meant to convey. Three main conceptual levels were also addressed to test these ideas: the ground level, the program level and the building level.

The site that was selected as the location for this proposition is not on land but instead will occupy the space in the St. Lawrence River. Crossing between Cornwall Island and the United States is a section of the St. Lawrence River. Currently a suspension bridge approximately 500 meters long crosses over this river channel and was constructed in the 1930s to connect Canada and the USA by road. The funding for construction and maintenance of the bridge itself is handled by a tri-national group known as the Seaway International Bridge Corporation (SIBC), consisting of members from the USA and Canada and Akwesasne. This river channel is the identified location of the border between countries. The site was selected for the following reasons:

◀ Fig. 6.13: Satellite image of proposed project site

- The middle of the river is the location of the Canada-USA border as it is documented.
- The river is a shared space; although the two sides claim ownership over a portion of the river it is ambiguously defined.
- The river changes as the seasons change (freeze thaw) fostering an idea of change and renewal.
- The river has a history that connects the community, as a former transportation network.
- The act of connecting the three nations (including Akwesasne First Nation) with a bridge is an effort in recognizing shared difference and new-founded respect.

The project proposes to reimagine the replacement of this suspension bridge with a new bridge structure that will integrate the proposed port of entry building facilities described below within the overall structure of the bridge as threshold.





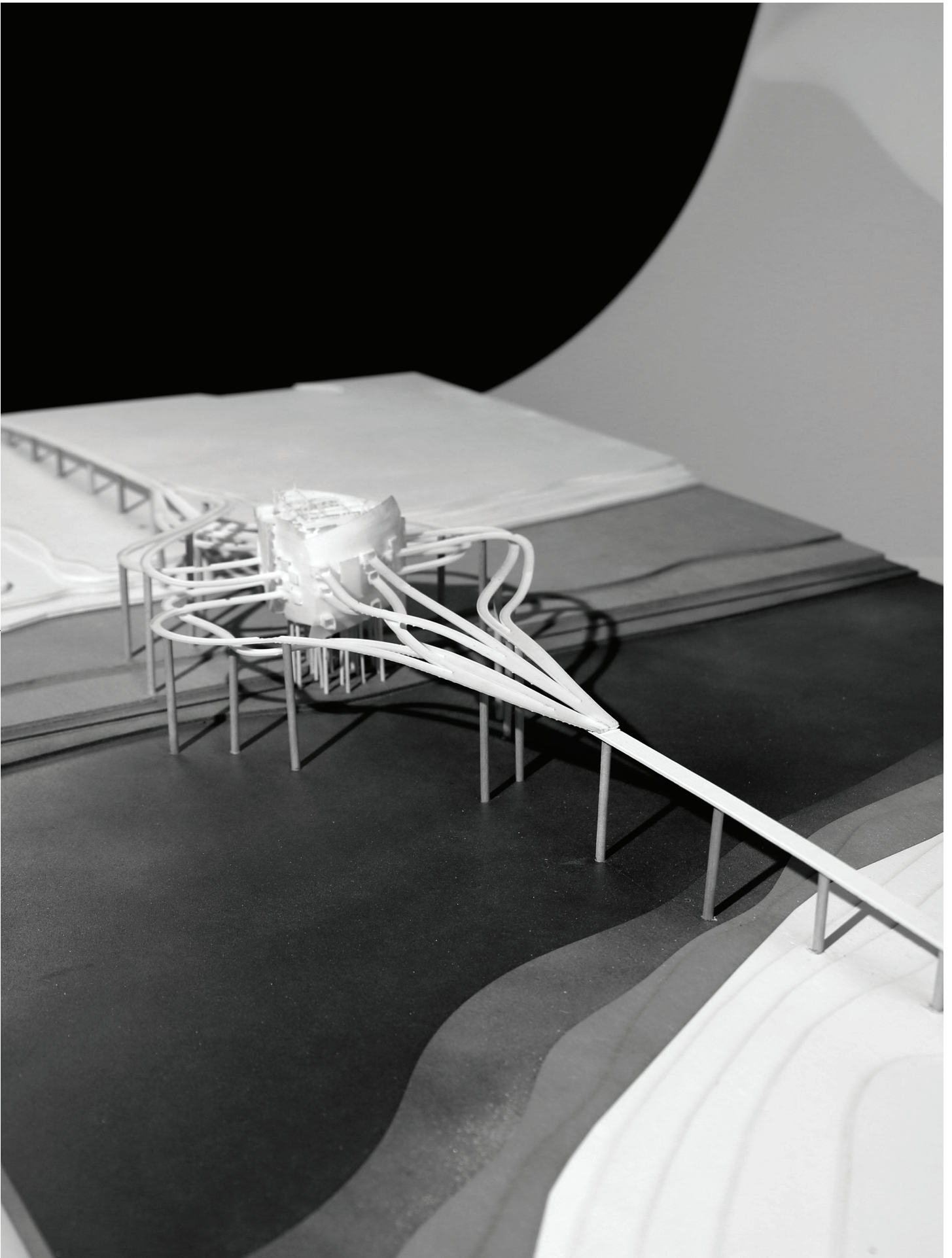
## SPATIAL DIAGRAMS

Diagram A: represents a point in the process of the design that paralleled the selection of the site for this building. On the left is a representation of the standard type crossing, an arrangement with two separate buildings on either side of the border. The flow of traffic moves across the border mostly fluidly and the building plays little to no role for most travelers. The diagram on the right served as the referent throughout much of the design process. It is an early representation of two main ideas that the building was to develop. The first being that the port of entry need not be thought of as two separate entities but instead just one. What this allows for is a reduction in the redundant spaces that are not used frequently in the plan for both buildings and thus allows for a reduction in construction cost or the opportunity for cross-programming, including the introduction of additional alternative spaces. Secondly the diagram is a representation of the idea that rather than a typical POE being a place that instills anxiety and is not thought of a place a traveler would ever want to dwell, could the building become a place that encourages travelers to stop and occupy the place as a threshold?

▲ Fig. 6.14: Diagram A: Flow patterns across existing and imagined Ports of Entry buildings by author

◀ Fig. 6.15: Diagram B: Building concept showing Venn diagram arrangement and void of overlapping zones by author

Diagram B: came about as a refinement of the first diagram. If the idea to be developed was the notion of creating a space for multiple nations, what formal interactions could help guide the design through conveying this? The colored circle is a representation of identity and the overlap between is a representation of the blending interaction that each has. Blue to Red, Blue to Purple and so on. The point of overlap between the three figuratively represented many of the ideas that the thesis began to search for. It proposes a shared space, a space belonging to no one in particular but to all. The form is derivative of the three groups of people, without all three the form doesn't remain the same. This was enough to proceed with design.



## PROJECT GROUND LEVEL

The first approach to addressing the language of the building is dealt with through the site. As mentioned above the building will be located within the river as this is the defined location of the border. The physical position of the building sits precisely at the point of interstation of the border and the current suspension bridge crossing over it. The central point of the building starts at this intersection and expands outward from there. As shown in Diagram A the building becomes an icon along the line rising out of the border like a marker for where the border in fact is, otherwise this is not apparent.

Water currently rushes over the proposed base of the building; however the project proposes an infilled mound of earth acting as an island, or a constructed piece of territory that straddles the border and the building. It can only be accessed by water, whether through swimming from the shore of Cornwall Island or by approach from a boat. The island contains a landscaped rocky mound and a fortified concrete square in the center. Inside the square are benches and tables, a place of gathering below the building. This is a mysterious place belonging to all nations and disconnected from political administrative functions located above, a place to look up through the atrium to the stars to reflect and experience the ancient water navigation routes, to fish or canoe and to be part of the operation of a border without being subjected to it.

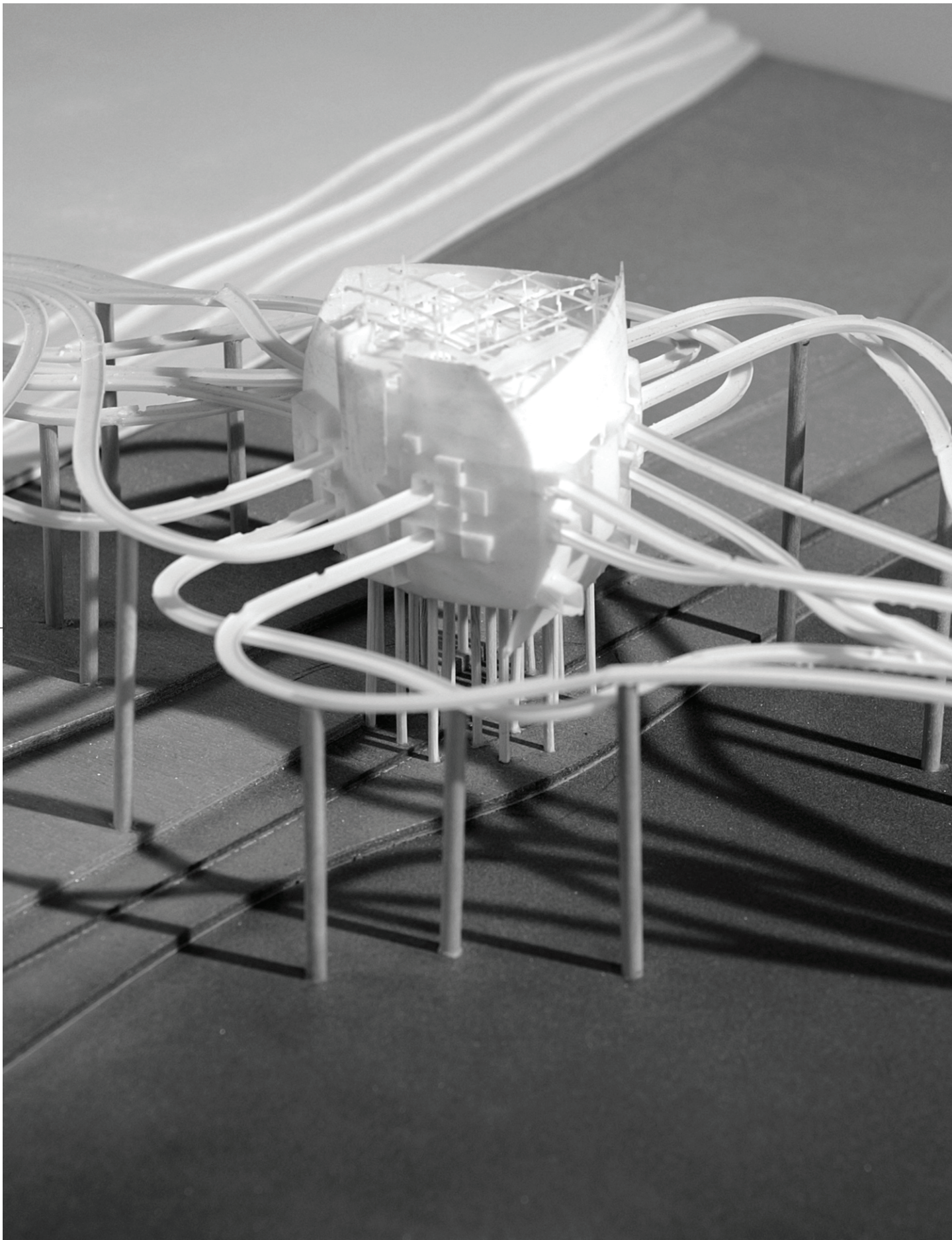
◀ Fig. 6.16: Photograph of site model looking from the south-west. Model by author

## PROJECT PROGRAM LEVEL

The second approach is through adjusting the program. As these facilities are traditionally used as places of human processing they generally consist of queuing areas, inspection areas, storage and administration space. These spaces discourage gathering and dwelling. The project will integrate into one facility both CBSA and CBP POE buildings. The decision to integrate both buildings into one was driven through the desire to reduce redundancy of spaces and to allow stronger cross-border communication by port of entry authorities. The normal operation of the port building relies on secondary and tertiary inspection areas to be available on an as needed basis. However in reality these are spaces which are not used frequently but are necessary as demand requires. The following is a list of spaces of low use frequency that will be shared between both CBSA and CBP, rather than each agency building their own dedicated space.

Training Facilities: Reduction of 3000sf  
 Holding Areas (Cells): Reduction of 2000sf  
 Search Areas: Reduction of 2000sf





Seizure Storage: Reduction of 3000sf  
Mechanical/Circulation space: Reduction of ~15,000sf

This amounts to an approximate space savings of 25,000 square feet in a combined facility scenario, significantly reducing redundant program spaces.

As the standard funding model for POEs relies on the supply of funding at a federal level, the program is traditionally heavily scrutinized and any opportunity to save cost and space is encouraged. In comparison, this project proposes that the savings in space from the normal model be applied to alternative spaces.

In many cases ports of entry are waypoints along a path for a travelling public. They act as points that necessitate stopping, either to use a rest room or as places to stretch one's legs. The benefit of this site specifically is that the St. Lawrence region offers spectacular views of natural splendor that have the potential to add to the experience of crossing as threshold and encourage stopping in addition to being processed. For users of the site on a daily basis or people from the adjacent communities, the building can become a place of cross-border communication, a neutral gathering place for all communities to meet. This is an important addition to the area as a neutral space doesn't currently exist but is intuitively natural for border communities.

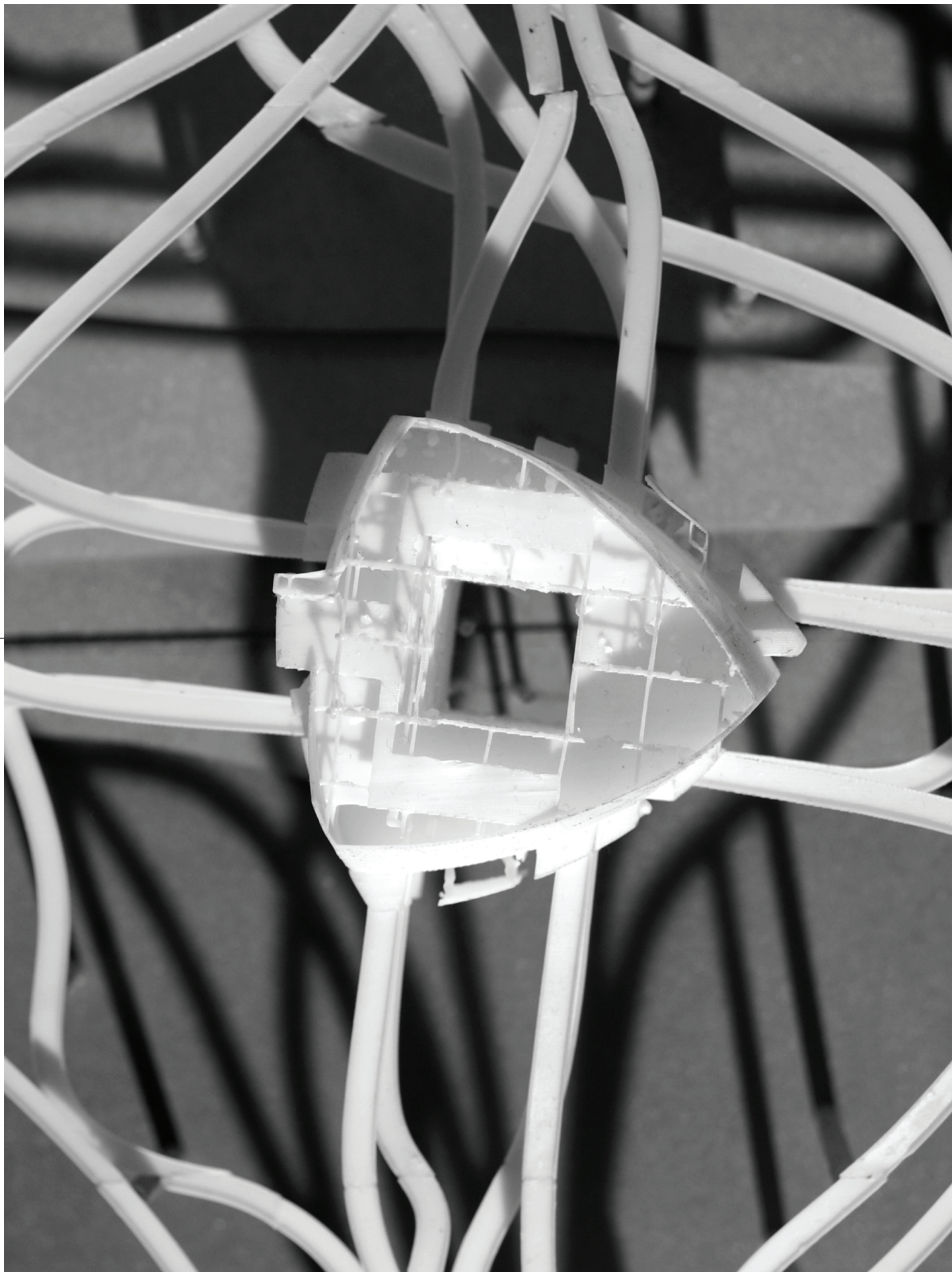
The building contains a community hall on Level 7 that will house a community gallery, gathering room, dining area and kitchen. The gallery area will serve to function as a space where rotating exhibits can be displayed, with a focus on the ideas of cross border issues and discourse on the genesis of borders as they develop and fade away. As a community space the hall can be used for events and would be an enticing place because of the vistas offered by its elevation and location along the river. Direct access will be provided to a lookout/vista at the highest point of the building which will serve to draw travelers up and through the layers of the building.

By placing multiple community spaces within a building that traditionally does not contain a place for such it offers the opportunity to understand the reading of the building through another lens. Who do these spaces belong to? No one or everyone? The port becomes a space of inclusion.

The proposed project imagines a modern port of entry facility, one which acts as an attractor of people rather than a space which instills a sense of anxiety. Fostering a sense of shared communal difference is radically new – and intentionally inclusive.

◀ Fig. 6.17: Photograph of the site model showing building detail, looking from the south-west. Model by author







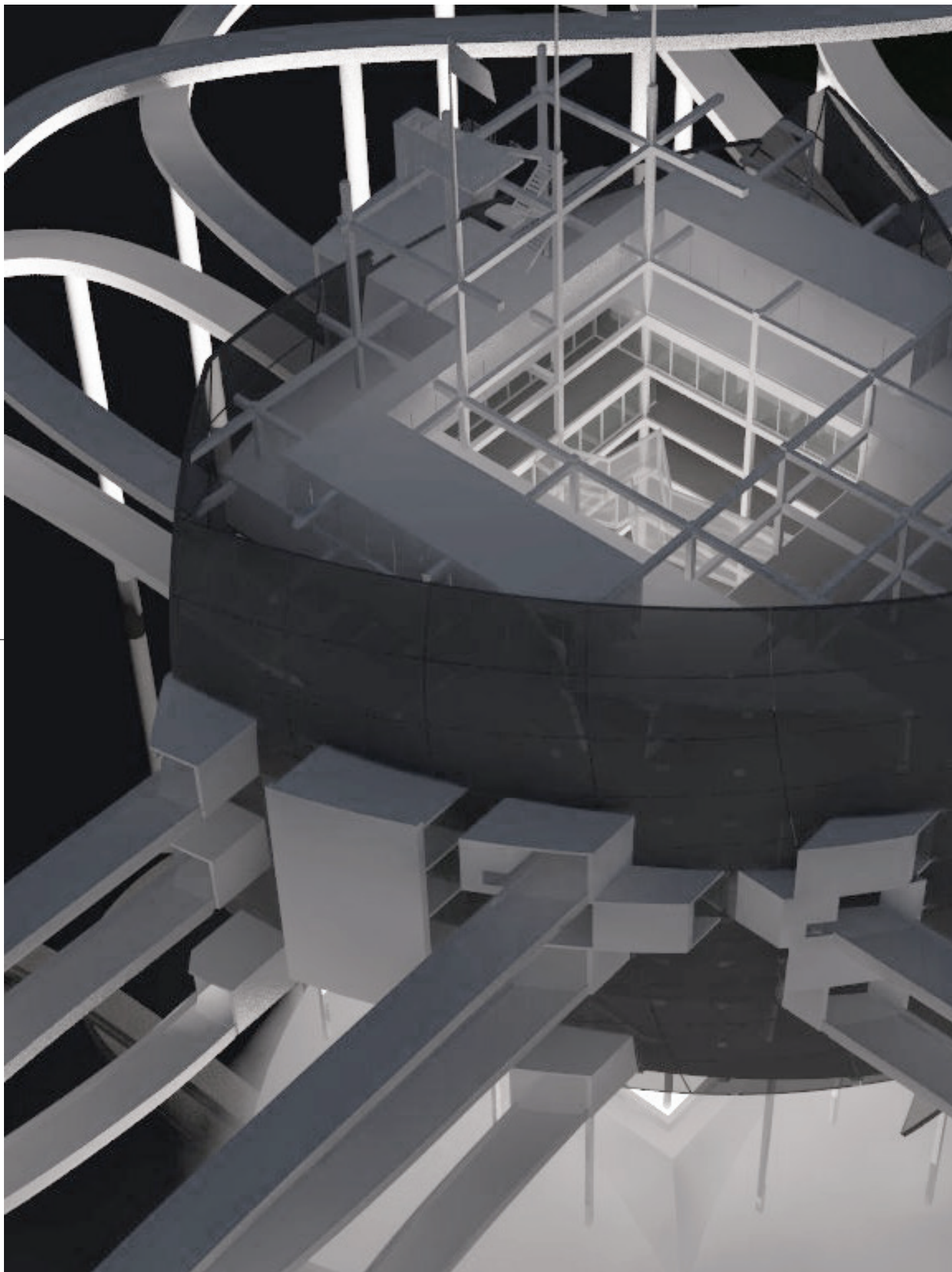
## BUILT FORM LEVEL

The third approach to addressing the language of the port is to consider the building as an icon, one capable of being read not just as a POE but as a place of shared collective difference (i.e. obelisk and threshold.) The building itself contains an outer face; standing in the landscape it is able to be read as a marker or a beacon. The three distinct faces of an earlier sketch created a void extending upward to act as a veil to define the interior fourth space of the atrium. The faces of the building become three separate surfaces to tell the stories of the identities that surround the building. Like the tracings described above, the surfaces of the building contain varying transparent layers of history that represent the identities of the people it serves. As the daylight diminishes the elevations of the building become projection screens for video and imagery, allowing the building to glow as a beacon in the landscape. The projection surfaces again would contain imagery representing the identities and would be scripted according to important days and times throughout the year. Like a flag at half-mast the building becomes a medium to tell to story of events and moments of importance.

The void inside of the three sided veil becomes the place of several functions. The program of the building is placed therein beginning first with a grid system influenced by the 9 square grid (including its orientation) of the city of Cornwall. The regularized structure defines the spatial and structural arrangement for the building. The systematic structure against the abstract veil intentionally alludes to the political structure operating inside. The grid however contains a void. Drawn up through the center of the building is a consistent void from ground level to the sky. The presence of this 'absence' again alludes to a vertical obelisk marker shaft; however, instead of marking a place in the ground and casting a shadow upon it, the void becomes the place where light enters into the building. The presence of absence is experienced by everyone entering the building as it is placed tangentially to all roads and walking areas of the exterior plaza. The atrium void is the place in the building where you can fully understand the connection between the government operations, the community functions and the building's connection to the earth and sky as a beacon.

Finally, the road network becomes a place of slow movement and reflection around the building. The act of crossing over is slowed down through the fluid sinuous nature of the roads. Referencing the fluid nature of the river below or the first nation language maps where boundaries are spatial and linguistic. The road network itself begins fluidly but as it intersects with the building becomes regularized into straight sections following the

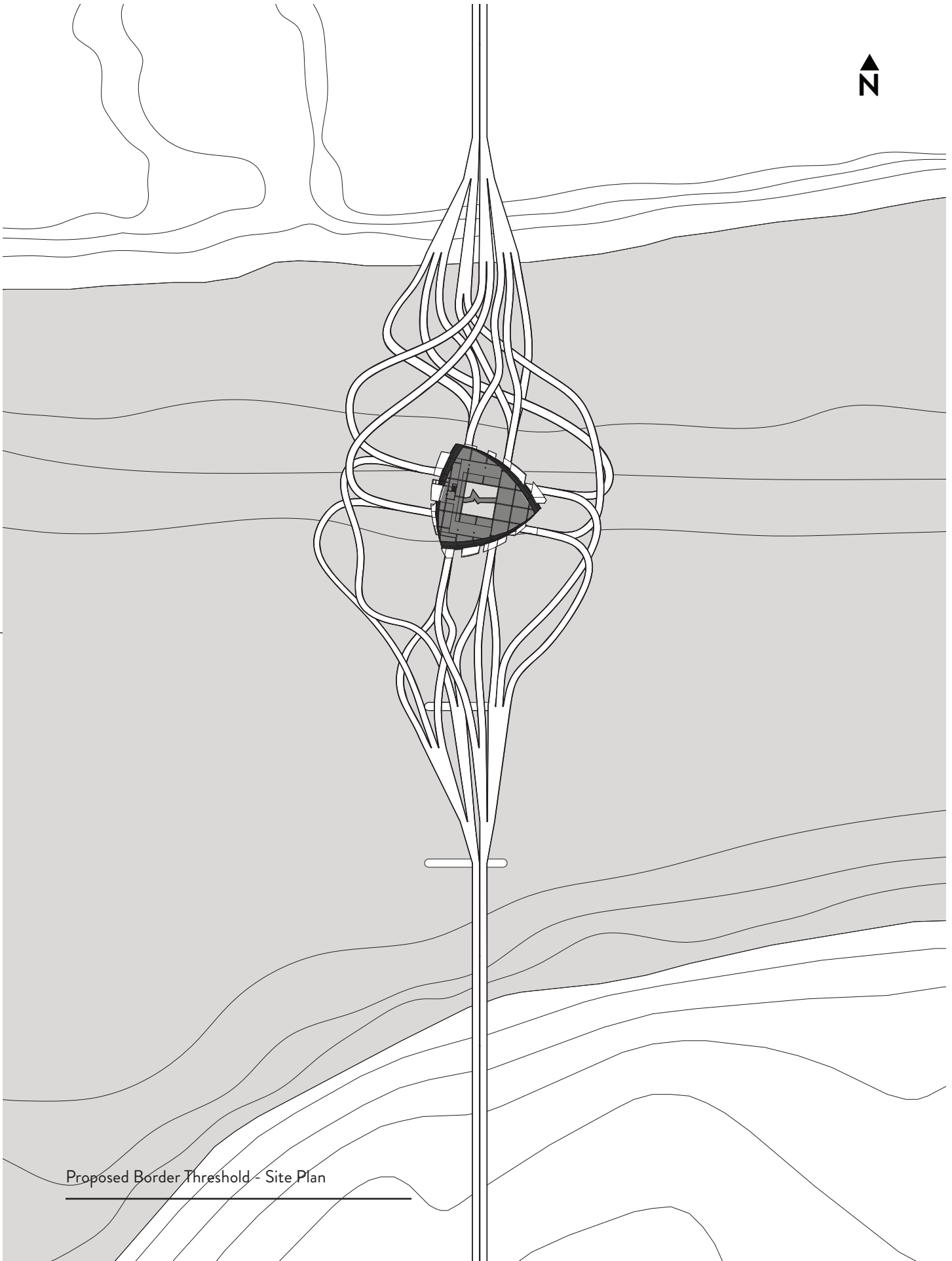
◀ Fig. 6.18: Photograph of the site model showing building detail looking from above. Model by author





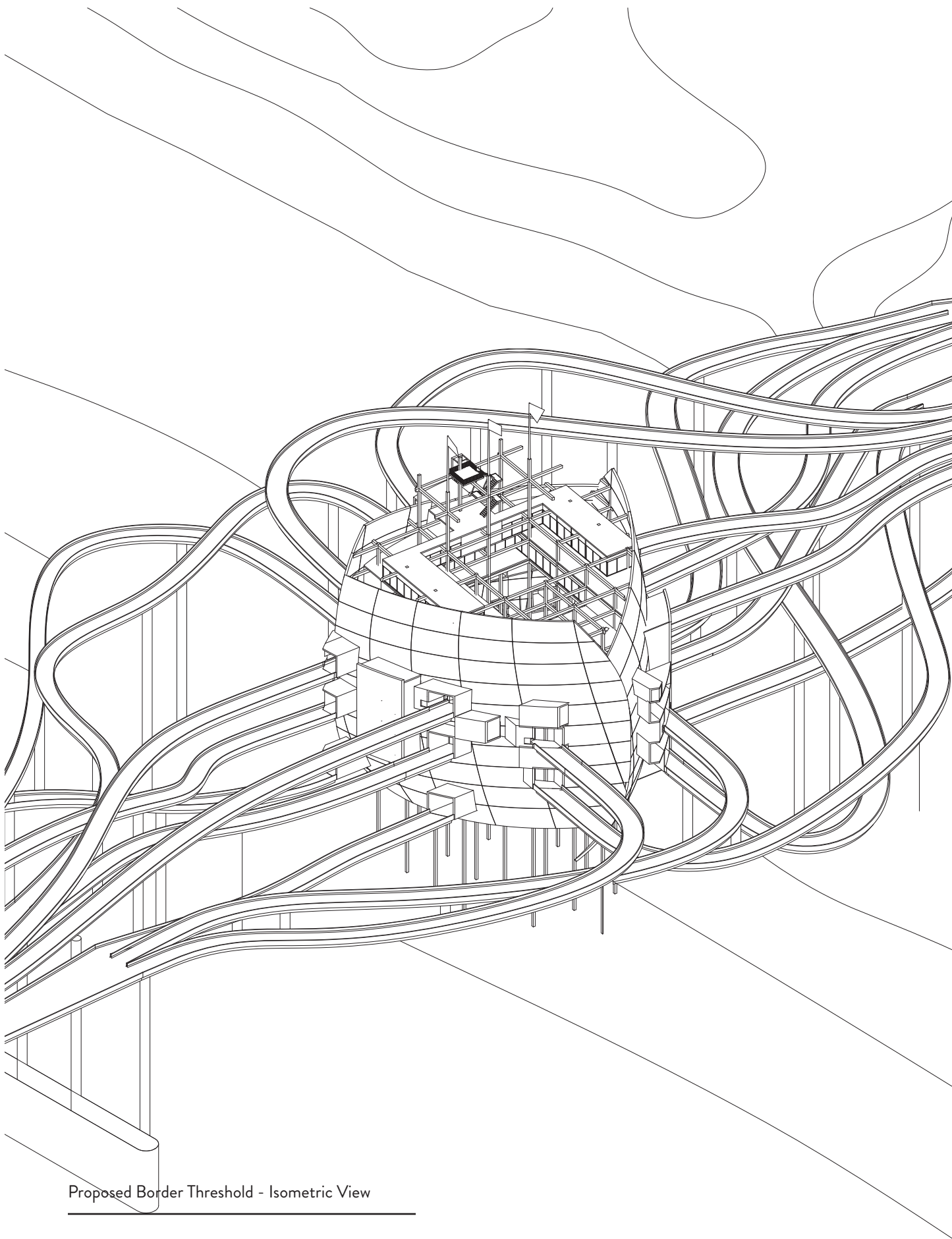
strict grid of the building, again implying a political structuring of the movement in the building. The slow meandering of the road networks allow each traveler to view the building both inside and out. As the process of primary inspection occurs, travelers navigate around all three sides of the building experiencing the surfaces and voids that express this collective difference. The building reads as an icon from a distance, not just from a car but along the shore or from a boat. Even from the sky, it becomes a community icon, expressing a new typology of border-crossing as inclusive threshold; it represents a new metaphor for 'Three Nations Crossing'.

◀ Fig. 6.19: Proposed border threshold -  
birdseye view at night by author



Proposed Border Threshold - Site Plan



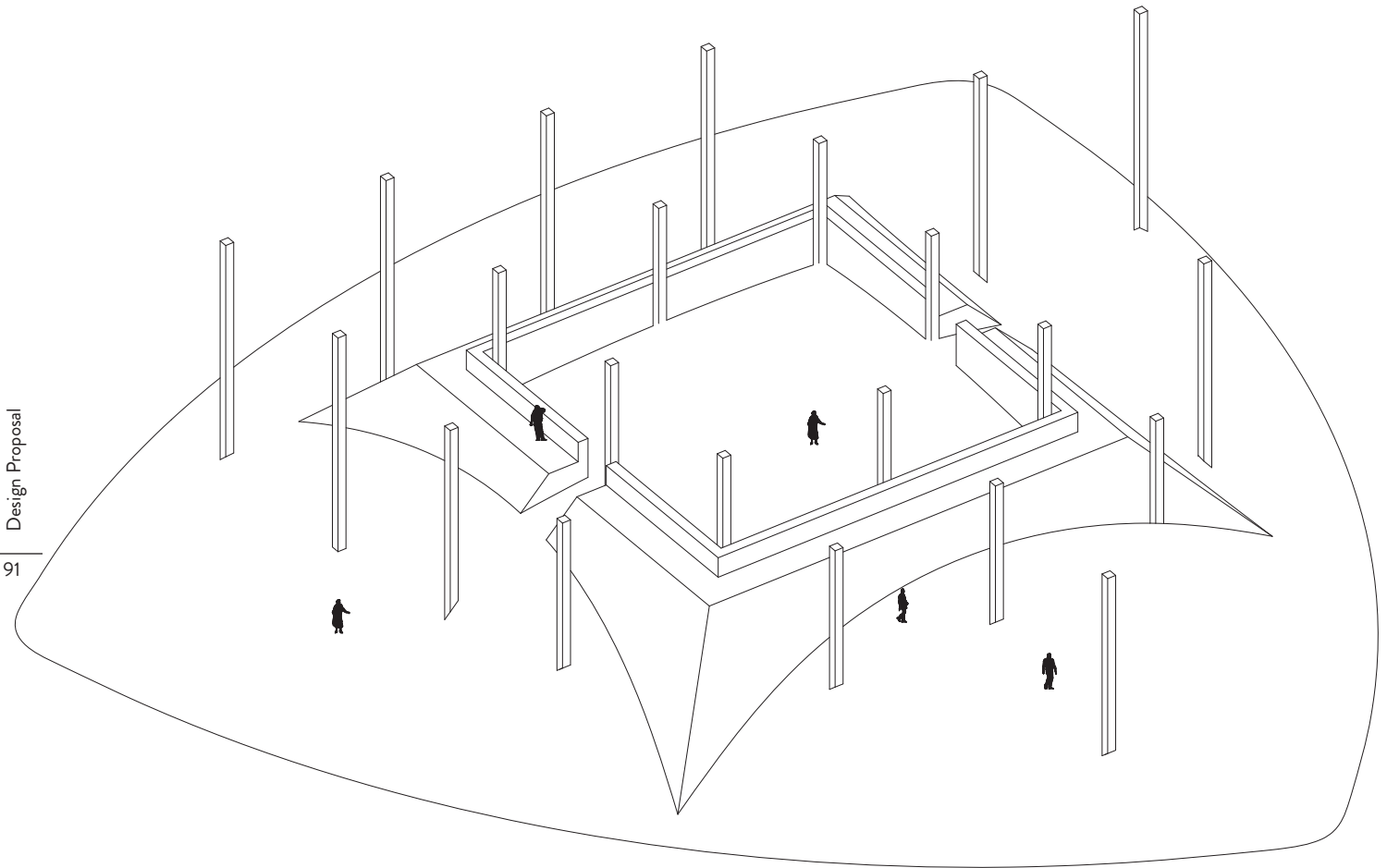


Proposed Border Threshold - Isometric View



## Level 0 Program Elements

- Public Park
- Viewing Platform
- Fishing points



Design Proposal

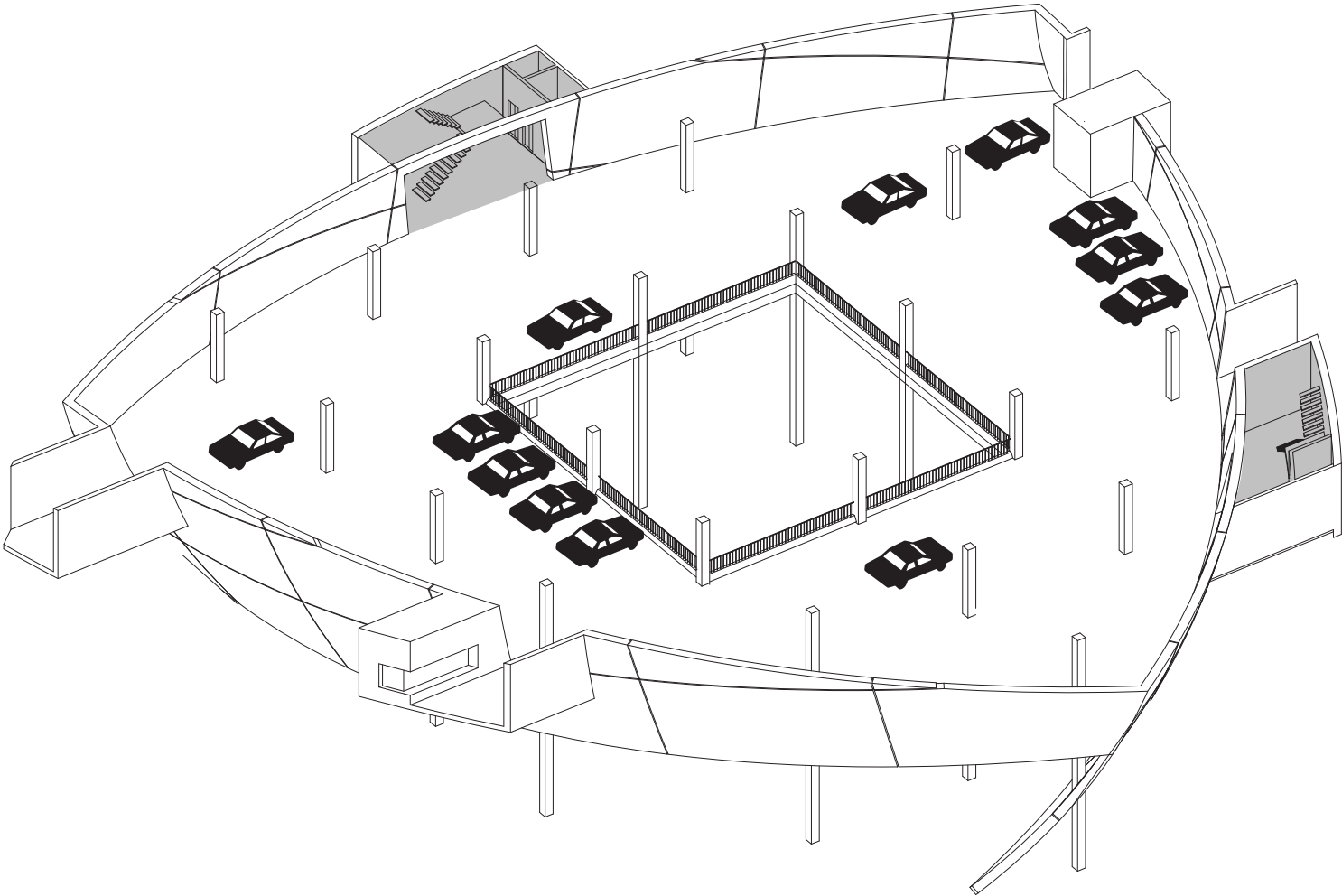
91

Proposed Border Threshold - Level 0 Isometric



# **Level 1 Program Elements**

- Akwesasne NEXUS Lane
- Public Parking
- Staff Parking
- Stair/Elevator Cores



Design Proposal

Proposed Border Threshold - Level 1 Isometric



Public Waiting		General Office	
Public Observation		Admin. Office	
Public Interview/Inspection		Seized Goods	
Commercial Waiting		Public Gallery/Dining	
Commercial Observation		Staff Area	
Comm. Interview/Inspection		Circulation/Mechanical	





View of Island At Base of Border Threshold

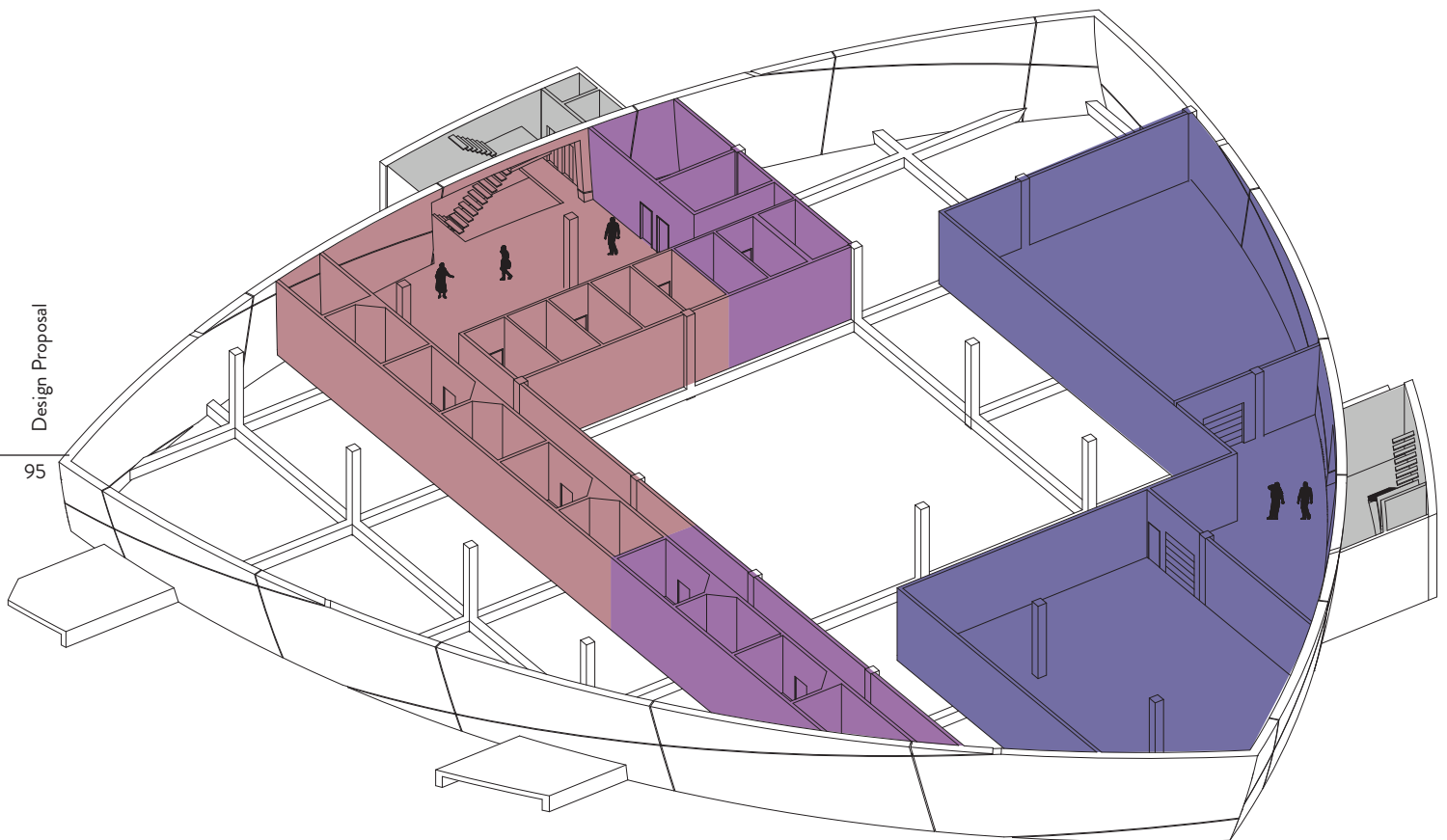






## **Level 2 Program Elements**

- Public Interview/Inspection
- Commercial Interview/Inspection
- Canadian Seized Goods Storage
- USA Seized Goods Storage
- Holding Cells
- Stair/Elevator Cores



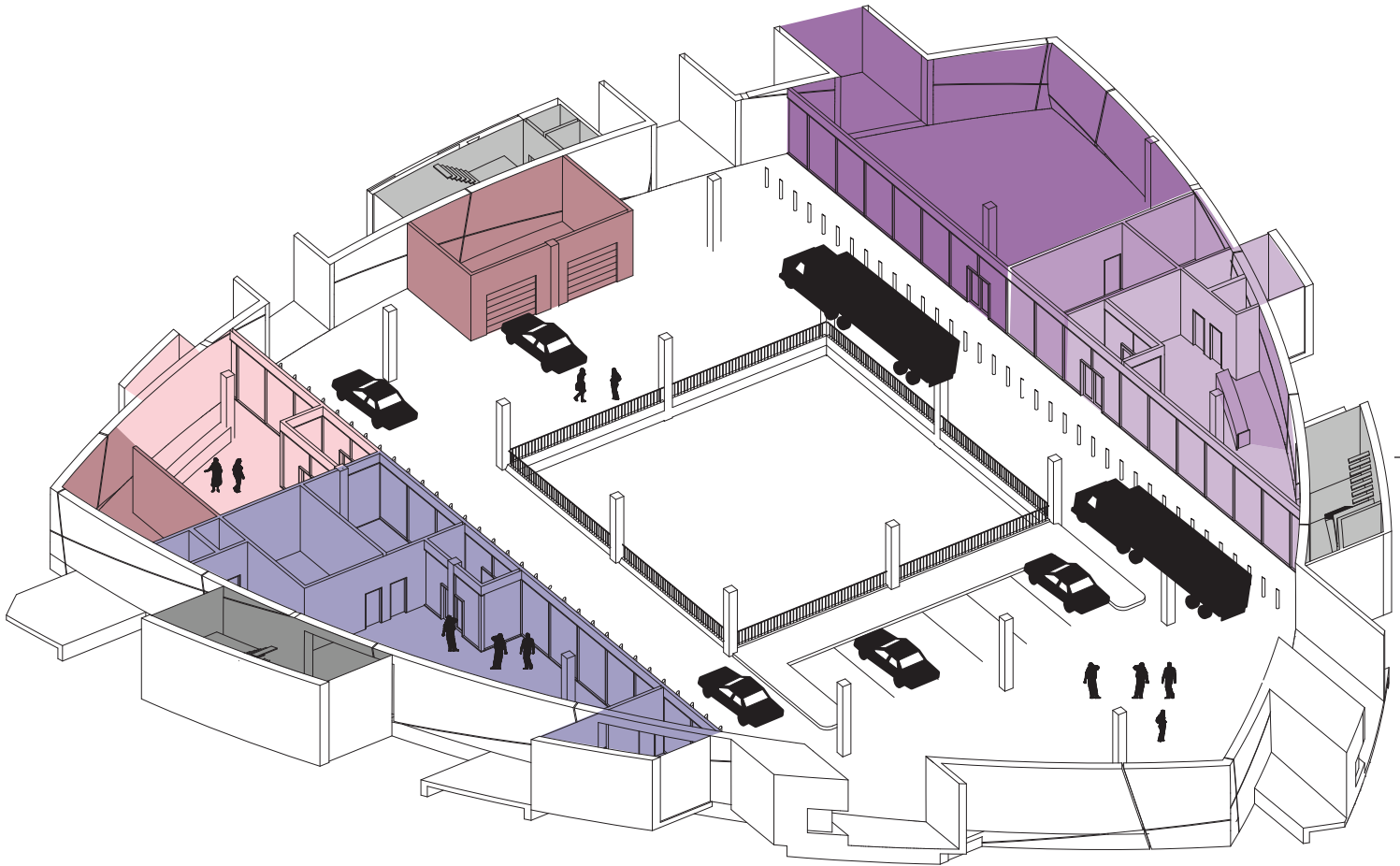
Proposed Border Threshold - Level 2 Isometric





## Level 3 & 5 Program Elements

- Traffic Primary Inspection Lanes (PIL)
- Commercial Primary Inspection Lanes (PIL)
- Commercial Counter
- Commercial Inspection Warehouse
- Commercial Offices
- Bus Primary Inspection Lane (PIL)
- Bus Secondary Inspection
- Stair/Elevator Cores



Proposed Border Threshold - Levels 3 & 5 Isometric

0 1m 5m 10m

Public Waiting		General Office	
Public Observation		Admin. Office	
Public Interview/Inspection		Seized Goods	
Commercial Waiting		Public Gallery/Dining	
Commercial Observation		Staff Area	
Comm. Interview/Inspection		Circulation/Mechanical	



View along Traffic Outbound Lanes Levels 3 & 5





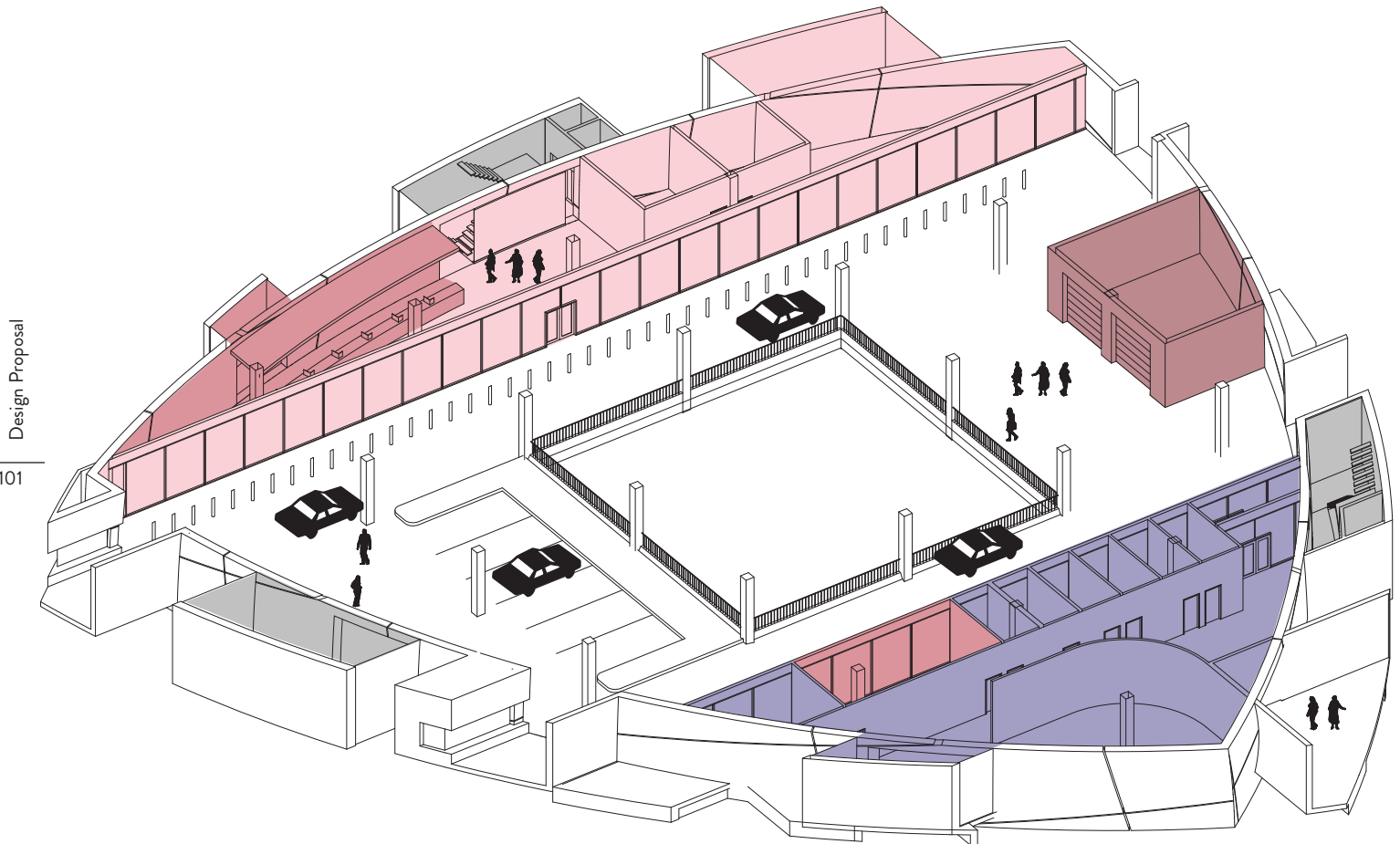
View of Traffic Counter Levels 3 & 5





## Level 4 & 6 Program Elements

- Traffic Primary Inspection Lanes (PIL)
- Traffic Counter
- Traffic Inspection Garage
- Traffic Offices
- Traffic Secondary Inspection
- Stair/Elevator Cores

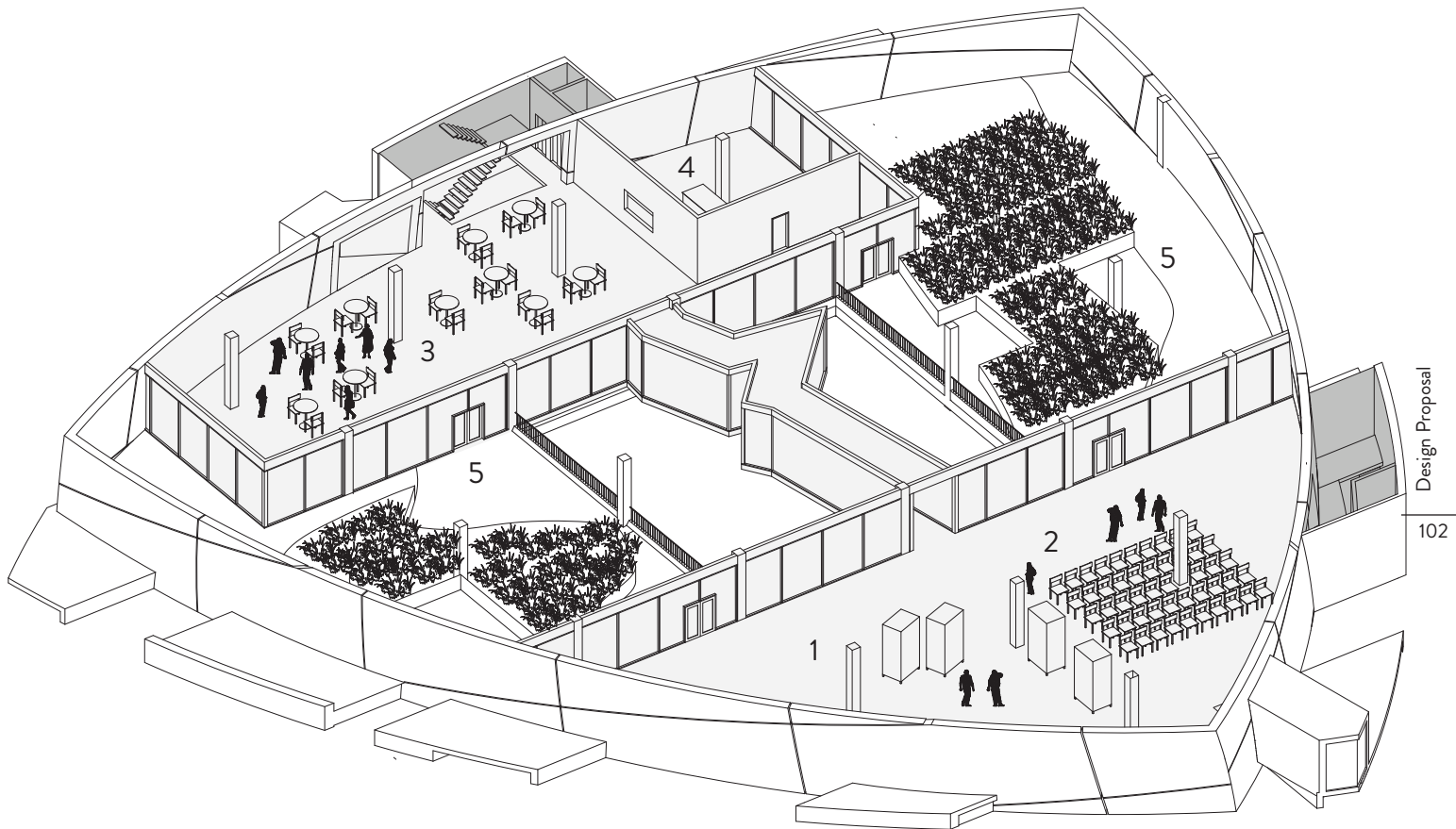


Proposed Border Threshold - Levels 4 & 6 Isometric



## Level 7 Program Elements

- Community Gallery (1)
- Community Gathering Hall (2)
- Community Dining Hall (3)
- Community Kitchen (4)
- Outdoor Garden (5)
- Stair/Elevator Cores



Design Proposal

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Proposed Border Threshold - Level 7 Isometric

0 1m 5m 10m

Public Waiting		General Office	
Public Observation		Admin. Office	
Public Interview/Inspection		Seized Goods	
Commercial Waiting		Public Gallery/Dining	
Commercial Observation		Staff Area	
Comm. Interview/Inspection		Circulation/Mechanical	



View Inside Level 7 Community Gallery



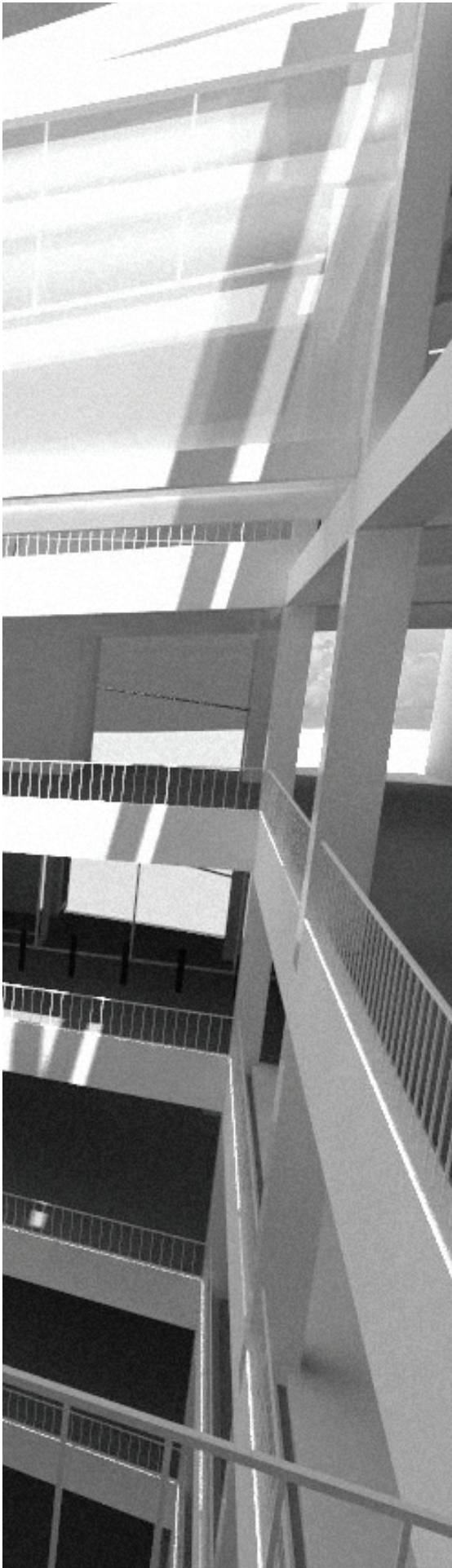






View Inside the "Absence" Space



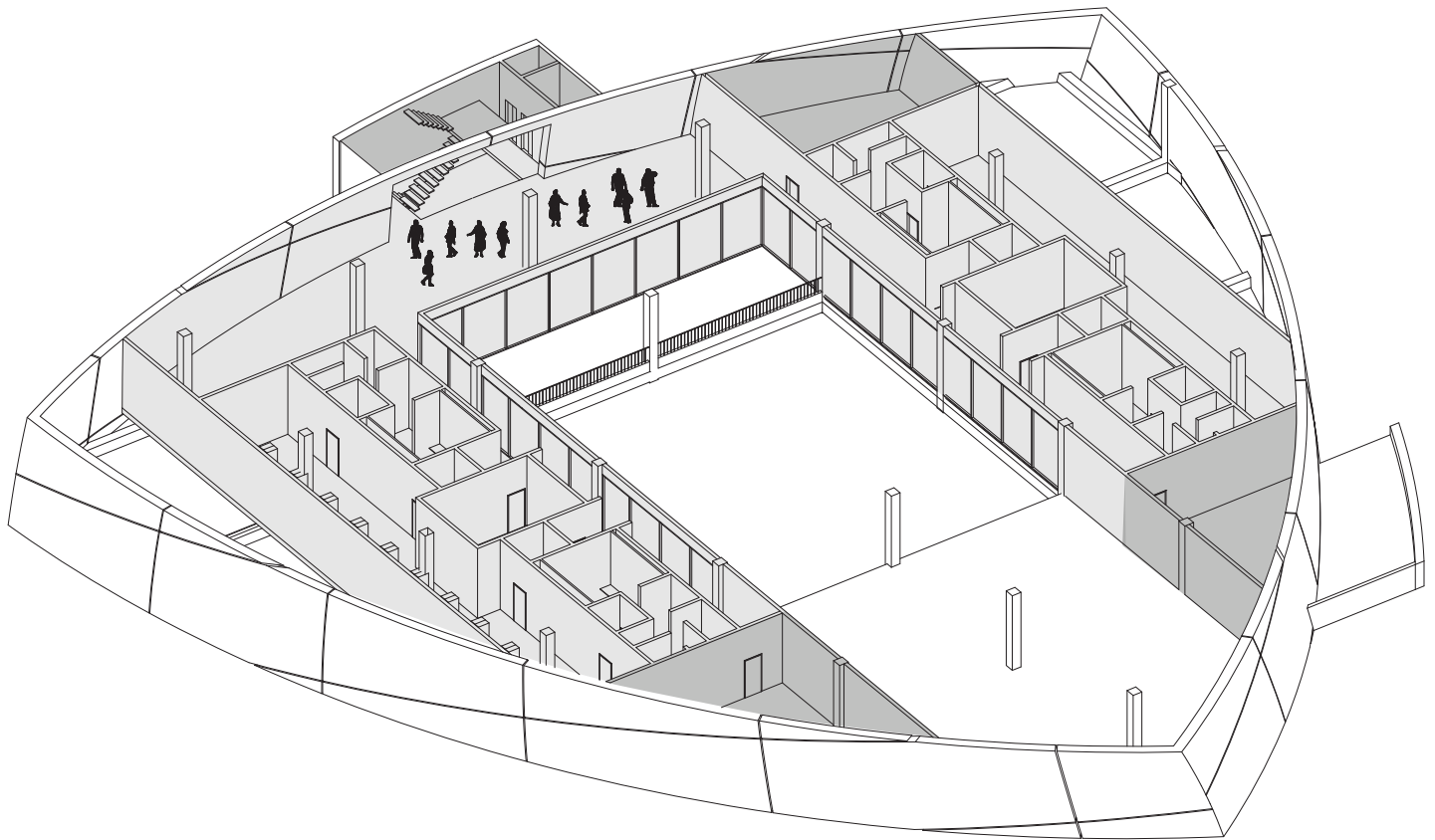


## Level 8 Program Elements

- Staff Lunch Room
- Staff Change Rooms
- Mechanical and Electrical Rooms
- Stair/Elevator Core

Design Proposal

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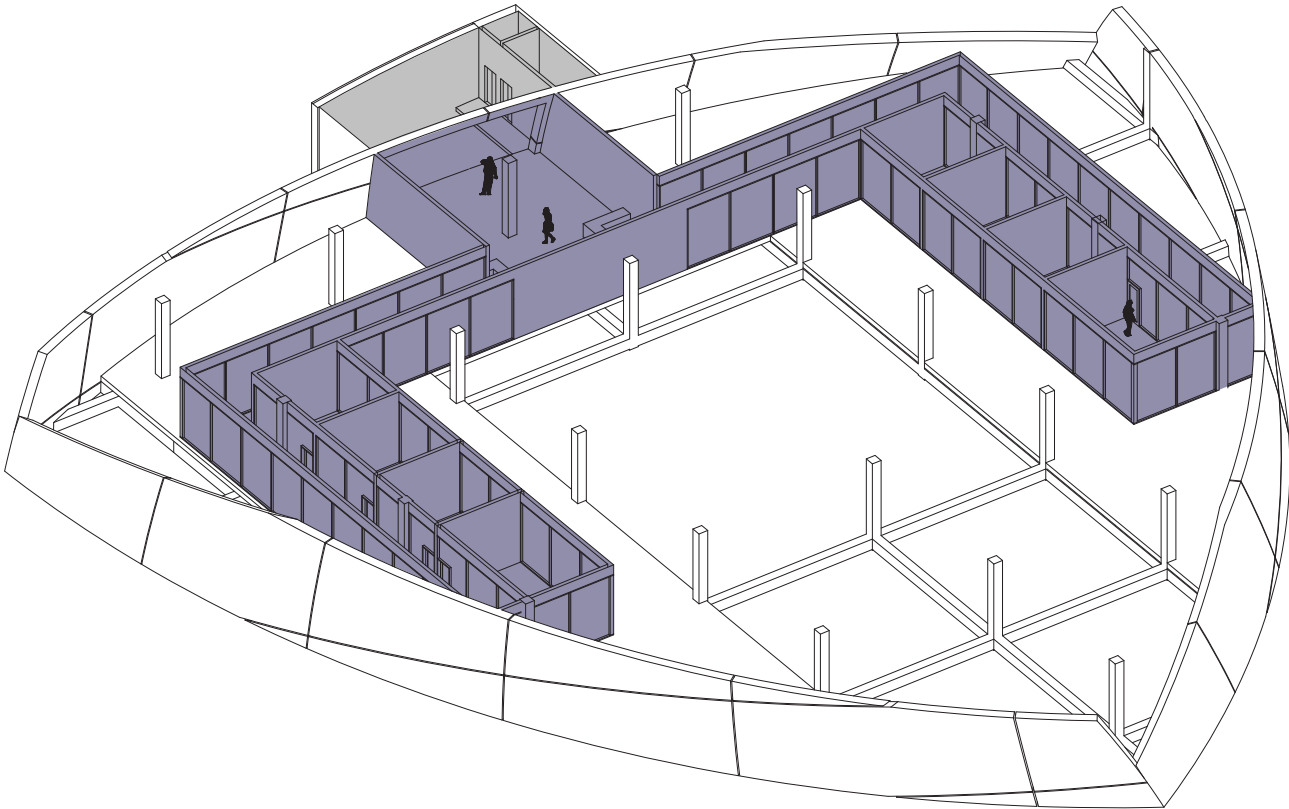
Proposed Border Threshold - Level 8 Isometric





# **Level 9 Program Elements**

- Administration Reception
- CBSA Offices
- CBP Offices
- Stair/Elevator Core



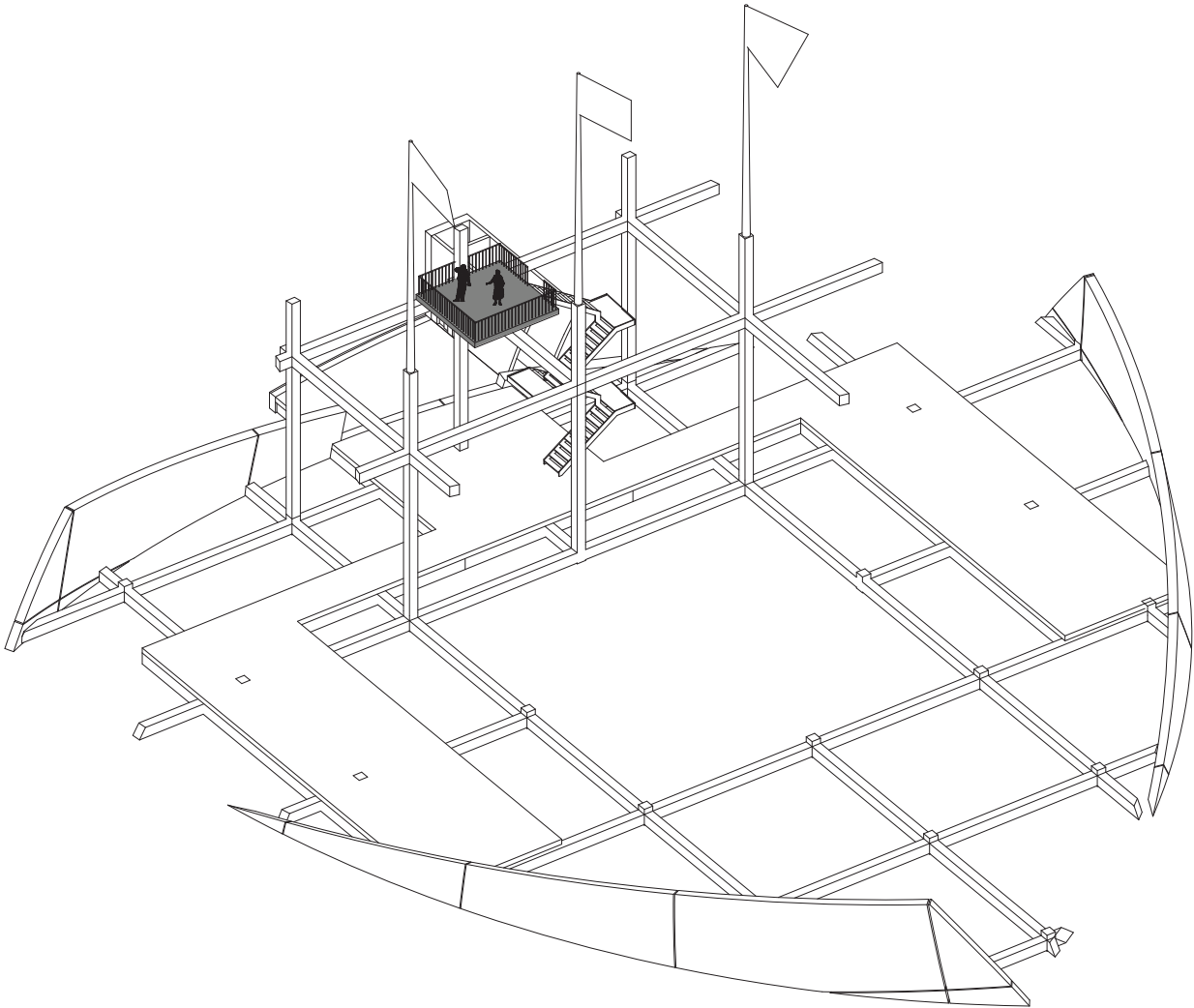
Proposed Border Threshold - Level 9 Isometric



Public Waiting		General Office	
Public Observation		Admin. Office	
Public Interview/Inspection		Seized Goods	
Commercial Waiting		Public Gallery/Dining	
Commercial Observation		Staff Area	
Comm. Interview/Inspection		Circulation/Mechanical	

# Level 10 Program Elements

- Observation Platform
- Stair/Elevator Core

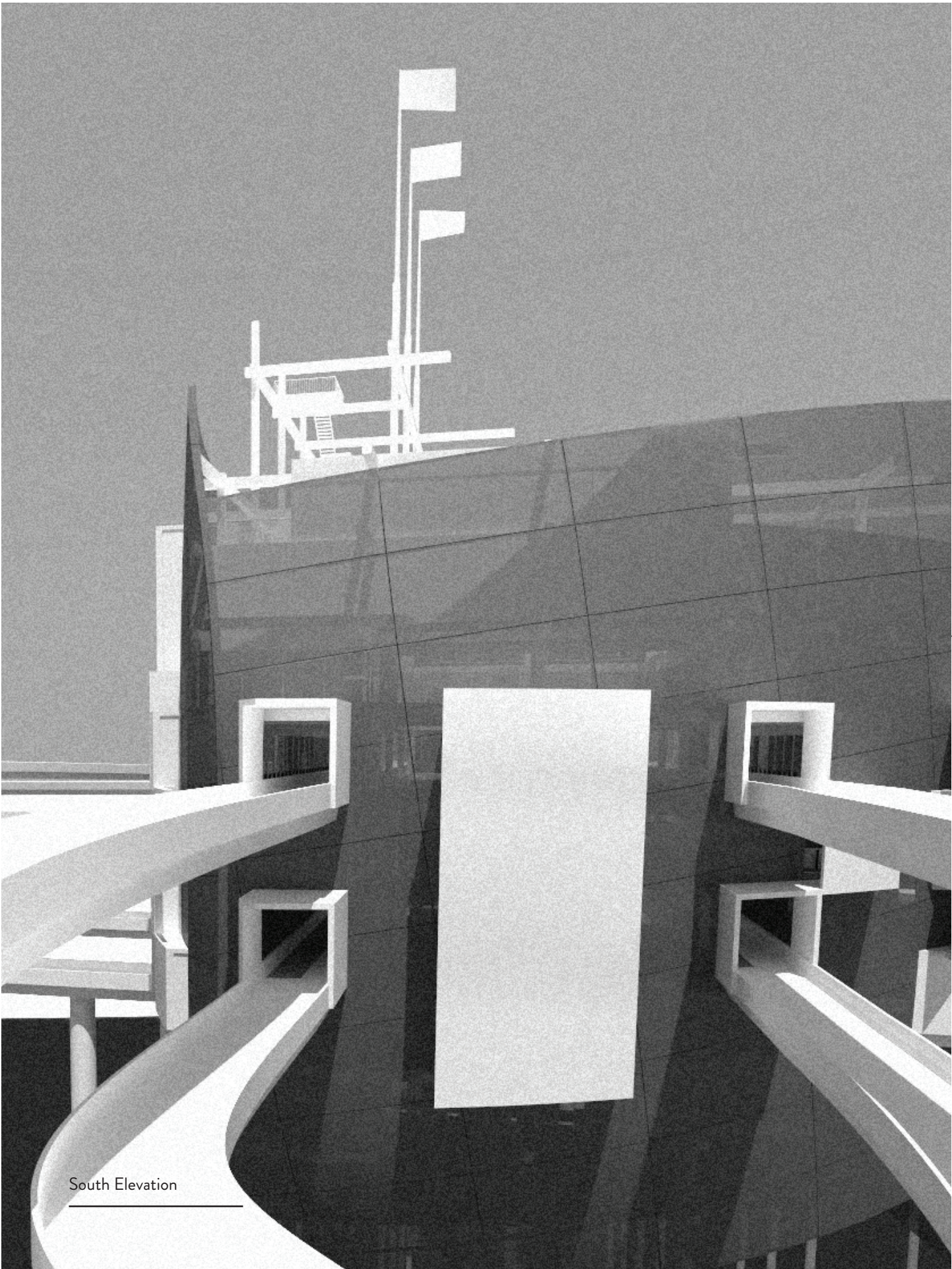


Proposed Border Threshold - Level 10 Isometric



Public Waiting		General Office	
Public Observation		Admin. Office	
Public Interview/Inspection		Seized Goods	
Commercial Waiting		Public Gallery/Dining	
Commercial Observation		Staff Area	
Comm. Interview/Inspection		Circulation/Mechanical	








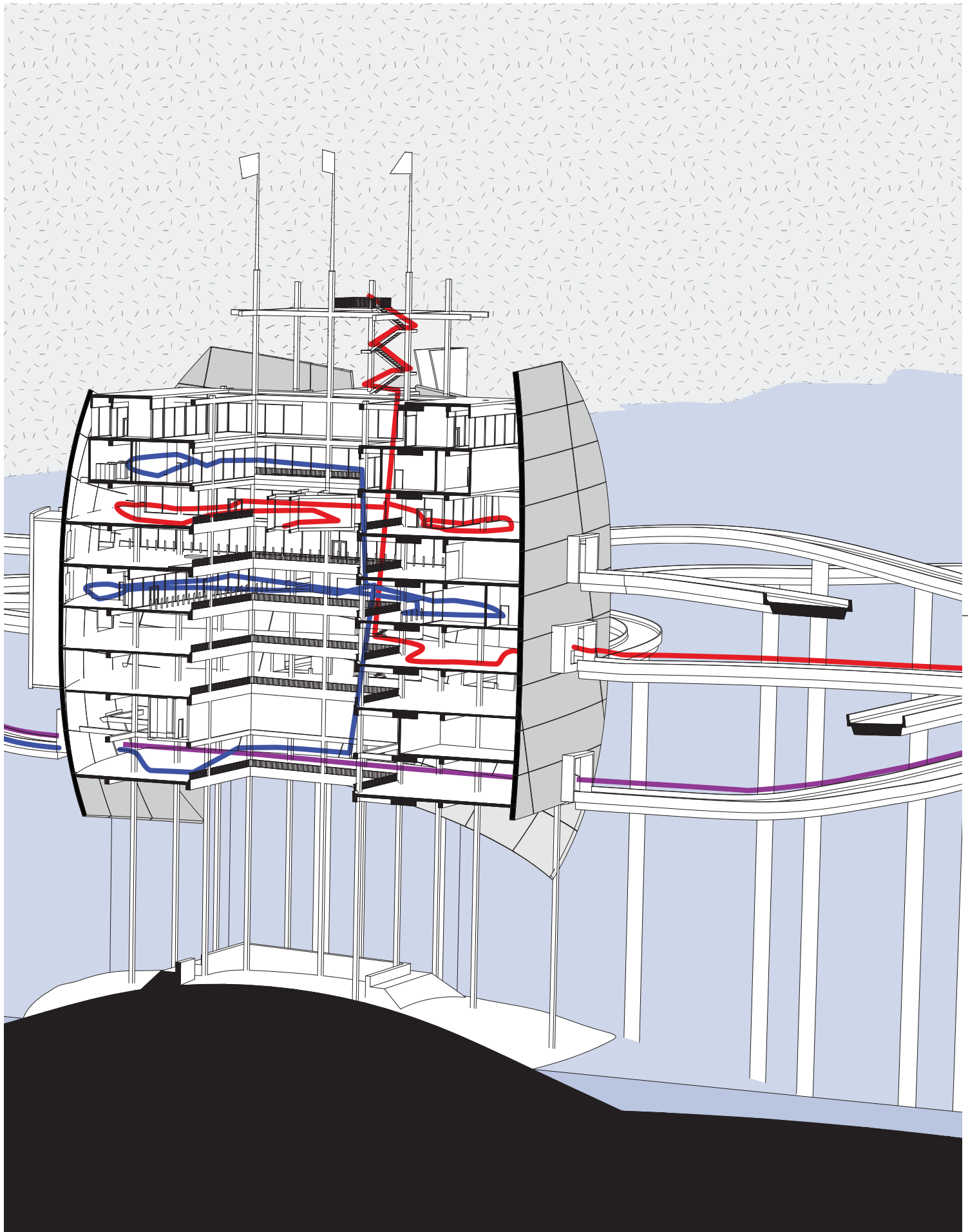
South Elevation

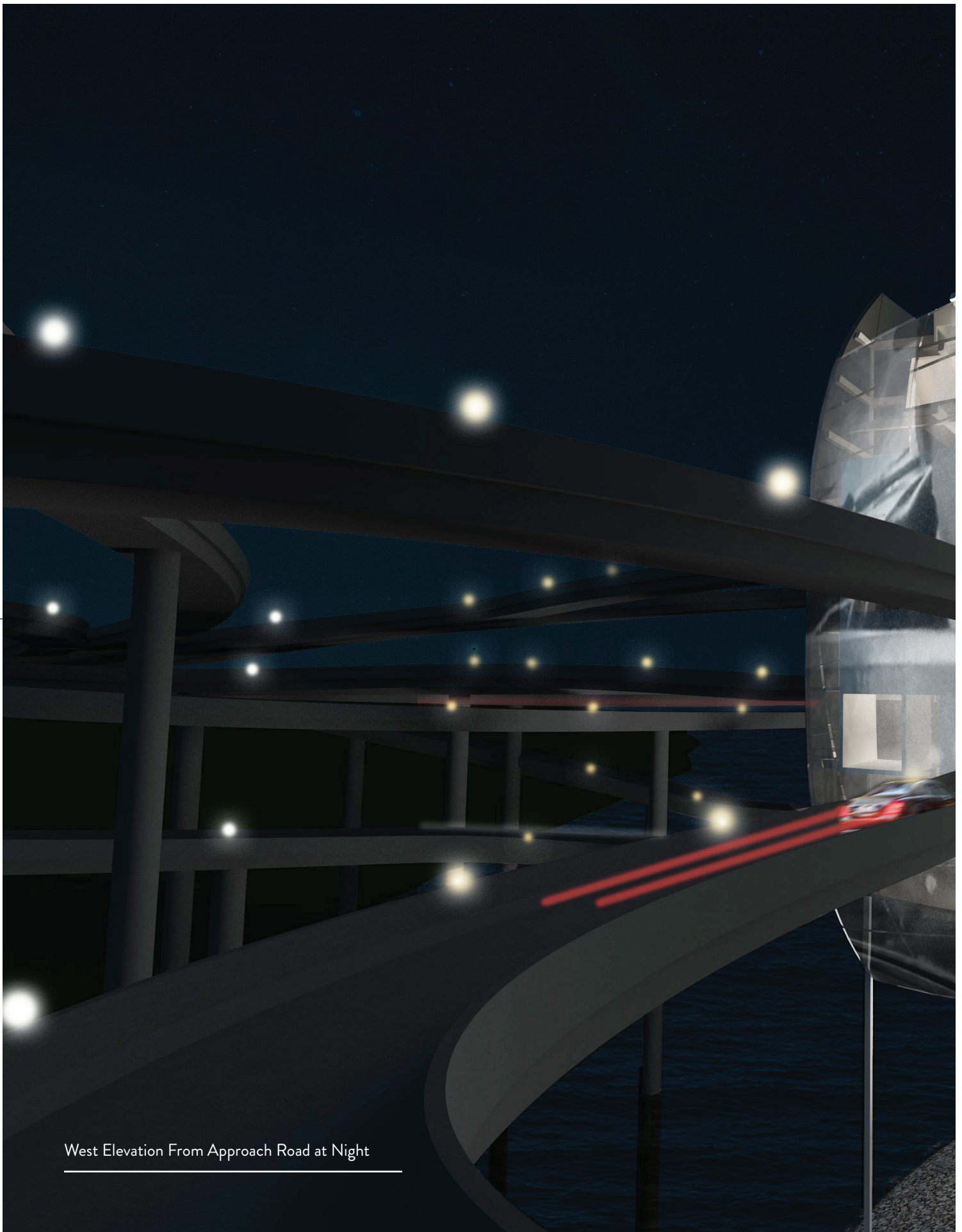


## Building Program Flow Scenarios

-  This line represents the flow pattern a person from Akwesasne driving north may take as they move through the border threshold, bypassing the non-dedicated lanes above.
-  This line represents the flow pattern a family coming to the building could take, stopping after the PIL lane to get out of the vehicle and traversing through the building up to the 7th and 10th floors.
-  This line represents the flow pattern of an employee of the building, moving from the parking area below, up to the change areas and then back down to their work level.

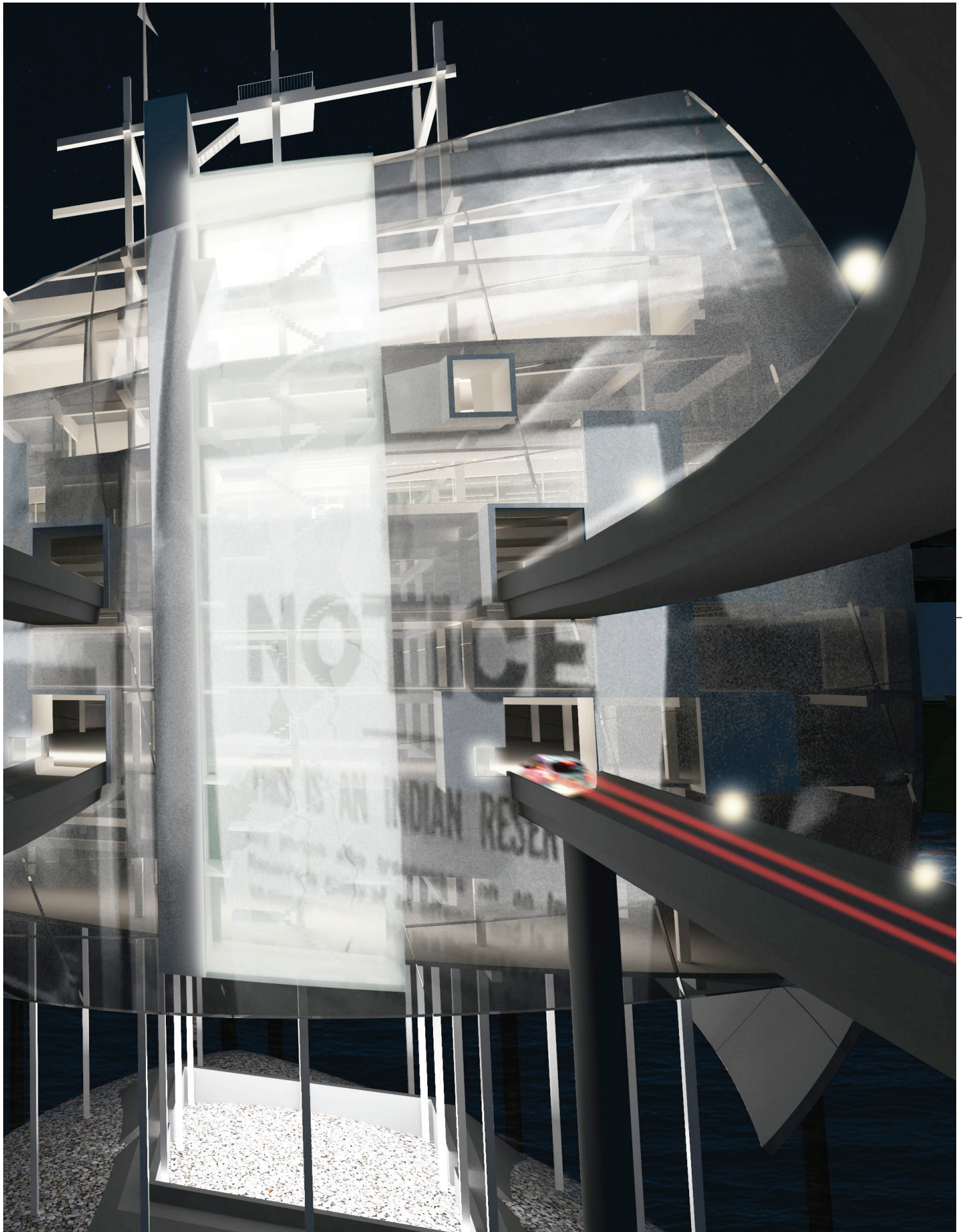






West Elevation From Approach Road at Night









## CONCLUSION

As a means of reconceptualizing Port of Entry architecture, the thesis investigates the interconnections within the act of human processing and the facilities constructed to complete this action. The proposed new typology for a border-crossing has been thought of in terms of a transitional zone, a place in which you are neither in nor out, but somewhere in the rhetoric of the architecture of *threshold* - a thickening of the border. The thesis addresses how the perceived requirement to enhance national security along the international border between Canada and the United States has resulted in a greater sense of division between the two countries. Rather than this border-crossing being an icon of separation, one building that joins three nations around a series of shared programs has been repositioned as a place of shared collective difference. Explored at multiple scales and through historical reference, the project considers how ports of entry could be reimagined as places of inclusion, particularly as much of the globe is in the process of reconfiguring borders.

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